

L E T T E R S

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS,

BY

SIR THOMAS FITZOSBORNE.

VOL. I.

MDCCCXX.



Printed by T. DAVISON,
Whitefriars.

FITZOSBORNE'S LETTERS.

VOL. I.



G. Murray sc.

W. MELMOTH, Esq. ESQ.

LONDON, PUBLISHED BY JOHN SHARPE, PICCADILLY.

1820.

33.9.



BIBLIOTHECA

REGIA

MONACENSIS.

IN forming the present series of BRITISH PROSE WRITERS, one part of the plan was to give a portrait and an allegorical vignette alternately; an arrangement however, which, in some cases, has been found impracticable: but the publisher doubts not that his best efforts to continue the embellishments in their projected form, will meet with the approbation of his subscribers.

William Melmoth, Esq. the author of FITZOSBORNE'S LETTERS, was the eldest son of an eminent lawyer of the same name, and member of the honourable society of Lincoln's Inn. His father, *whose portrait* precedes this preface, and who was born in the year 1666, exercised his profession, as we learn, "with a skill and integrity, which nothing could equal, but the disinterested motive that animated his labours. He often exerted his distinguished abilities, yet refused the reward of them, in defence of "the widow, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him." His admirable treatise on "The great Importance of a religious Life," deserves to be held in perpetual remembrance. In

a word, few ever passed a more useful, none a more blameless life. He died in 1743.

The publisher has received the assurance of an eminent dignitary of the church, the most intimate friend of the author of Fitzosborne, that no portrait of him exists. Respecting the Letters which are now reprinted, and which have so frequently been before the public, it is not necessary in this place to enlarge.

FITZOSBORNE'S LETTERS.

I. TO CLYTANDER.

Sept. 1739.

I ENTIRELY approve of your design : but whilst I rejoice in the hope of seeing Enthusiasm thus successfully attacked in her strongest and most formidable holds, I would claim your mercy for her in another quarter ; and after having expelled her from her religious dominions, let me entreat you to leave her in the undisturbed enjoyment of her civil possessions. To own the truth, I look upon enthusiasm, in all other points but that of religion, to be a very necessary turn of mind ; as indeed it is a vein which Nature seems to have marked, with more or less strength, in the tempers of most men. No matter what the object is, whether business, pleasures, or the fine arts ; whoever pursues them to any purpose, must do so *con amore* ; and enamoratos, you know, of every kind, are all enthusiasts. There is, indeed, a certain heightening faculty which universally prevails through our species ; and we are all of us, perhaps, in our several favourite pursuits, pretty much in the circumstances of the renowned knight of La Mancha, when he attacked the barber's brazen basin for Mambrino's golden helmet.

What is Tully's *aliquid immensum infinitumque*,

which he professes to aspire after in oratory, but a piece of true rhetorical Quixotism? Yet never, I will venture to affirm, would he have glowed with so much eloquence, had he been warmed with less enthusiasm. I am persuaded, indeed, that nothing great or glorious was ever performed, where this quality had not a principal concern; and as our passions add vigour to our actions, enthusiasm gives spirit to our passions. I might add, too, that it even opens and enlarges our capacities. Accordingly, I have been informed, that one of the great lights of the present age never sits down to study till he has raised his imagination by the power of music. For this purpose, he has a band of instruments placed near his library, which play till he finds himself elevated to a proper height; upon which he gives a signal, and they instantly cease.

But those high conceits which are suggested by enthusiasm, contribute not only to the pleasure and perfection of the fine arts, but to most other effects of our action and industry. To strike this spirit, therefore, out of the human constitution, to reduce things to their precise philosophical standard, would be to check some of the main wheels of society, and to fix half the world in an useless apathy. For if enthusiasm did not add an imaginary value to most of the objects of our pursuit; if fancy did not give them their brightest colours; they would generally, perhaps, wear an appearance too contemptible to excite desire:

Wearied we should lie down in death,
This cheat of life would take no more,
If you thought fame but empty breath,
I Phyllis but a perjured whore.—*Prior.*

In a word, this enthusiasm for which I am pleading, is a beneficent enchantress, who never exerts her magic but to our advantage, and only deals about her friendly spells in order to raise imaginary beauties, or to improve real ones. The worst that can be said of her is, that she is a kind deceiver, and an obliging flatterer. Let me conjure you, then, good Clytander, not to break up her useful enchantments, which thus surround us on every side; but spare her harmless deceptions in mere charity to mankind. I am, &c.

II. TO PHILOTES.

I SHOULD not have suffered so long an interval to interrupt our correspondence, if my expedition to Euphronius had not wholly employed me for these last six weeks. I had long promised to spend some time with him before he embarked with his regiment for Flanders; and, as he is not one of those Hudibrastic heroes who choose to run away one day that they may live to fight another, I was unwilling to trust the opportunity of seeing him to the very precarious contingency of his return. The high enjoyments he leaves behind him, might, indeed, be a pledge to his friends that his caution would at least be equal to his courage, if his notions of honour were less exquisitely delicate. But he will undoubtedly act as if he had nothing to hazard; though, at the same time, from the generous sensibility of his temper, he feels every thing that his family can suffer in their fears for his danger. I had an instance, whilst I was in his house, how much Euphronia's apprehensions for his safety are

ready to take alarm upon every occasion. She called me one day into the gallery, to look upon a picture which was just come out of the painter's hands; but the moment she carried me up to it, she burst out into a flood of tears. It was drawn at the request, and after a design of her father, and is a performance which does great honour to the ingenious artist who executed it. Euphronius is represented under the character of Hector, when he parts from Andromache, who is personated, in the piece, by Euphronia; as her sister, who holds their little boy in her arms, is shadowed out under the figure of the beautiful nurse with the young Astyanax.

I was so much pleased with the design in this uncommon family-piece, that I thought it deserved particular mention; as I could wish it were to become a general fashion to have all pictures of the same kind executed in some such manner. If, instead of furnishing a room with separate portraits, a whole family were to be thus introduced into a single piece, and represented under some interesting historical subject, suitable to their rank and character, portraits, which are now so generally and so deservedly despised, might become of real value to the public. By this means, history-painting would be encouraged among us, and a ridiculous vanity turned to the improvement of one of the most instructive, as well as the most pleasing, of the imitative arts. Those who never contributed a single benefit to their own age, nor will ever be mentioned in any after-one, might by this means employ their pride and their expense in a way, which might render them entertaining and useful

both to the present and future times. It would require, indeed, great judgment and address in the painter, to choose and recommend subjects proper to the various characters which would present themselves to his pencil; and undoubtedly we should see many enormous absurdities committed, if this fashion were universally to be followed. It would certainly, however, afford a glorious scope to genius, and probably supply us, in due time, with some productions which might be mentioned with those of the most celebrated schools. I am persuaded, at least, that great talents have been sometimes lost to this art, by being confined to the dull, though profitable, labour of senseless portraits; as I should not doubt, if the method I am speaking of were to take effect, to see that very promising genius, who, in consequence of your generous offices, is now forming his hand by the noblest models in Rome, prove a rival to those great masters whose works he is studying.

It cannot, I think, be denied, that the prevailing fondness of having our persons copied out for posterity, is, in the present application of it, a most absurd and useless vanity; as, in general, nothing affords a more ridiculous scene, than those grotesque figures which usually line the mansions of a man who is fond of displaying his canvass-ancestry:

Good Heaven! that sots and knaves should be so vain
To wish their vile resemblance may remain;
And stand recorded, at their own request,
To future times a libel or a jest!—*Dryden.*

You must by no means, however, imagine that I absolutely condemn this lower application of one of

the noblest arts. It has certainly a very just use, when employed in perpetuating the resemblances of that part of our species, who have distinguished themselves in their respective generations. To be desirous of an acquaintance with the person of those who have recommended themselves by their writings or their actions to our esteem and applause, is a very natural and reasonable curiosity. For myself, at least, I have often found much satisfaction in contemplating a well-chosen collection of the portrait kind, and comparing the mind of a favourite character, as it was either expressed or concealed in its external lineaments. There is something, likewise, extremely animating in these lively representations of celebrated merit; and it was an observation of one of the Scipios, that he could never view the figures of his ancestors without finding his bosom glow with the most ardent passion of imitating their deeds. However, as the days of exemplary virtue are now no more, and we are not, many of us, disposed to transmit the most inflaming models to future times; it would be but prudence, methinks, if we are resolved to make posterity acquainted with the persons of the present age, that it should be by viewing them in the actions of the past. Adieu. I am, &c.

III. TO PALAMEDES.

July 4, 1739.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fine things you allege in favour of the Romans, I do not yet find myself disposed to become a convert to your opinion: on the contrary, I am still obstinate enough to maintain that the fame of your admired nation is more daz-

zling than solid, and owing rather to those false prejudices which we are early taught to conceive of them, than to their real and intrinsic merit. If conquest, indeed, be the genuine glory of a state, and extensive dominions the most infallible test of national virtue, it must be acknowledged that no people in all history have so just a demand of our admiration. But if we take an impartial view of this celebrated nation, perhaps much of our applause may abate. When we contemplate them, for instance, within their own walls, what do we see but the dangerous convulsions of an ill-regulated policy? as we can seldom, I believe, consider them with respect to foreign kingdoms, without the utmost abhorrence and indignation.

But there is nothing which places these sons of Romulus lower in my estimation, than their unmanly conduct in the article of their triumphs. I must confess, at the same time, that they had the sanction of a god to justify them in this practice. Bacchus, or (as sir Isaac Newton has proved) the Egyptian Sesostris, after his return from his Indian conquests, gave the first instance of this ungenerous ceremony. But though his divinity was confessed in many other parts of the world, his example does not seem to have been followed, till we find it copied out in all its insolent pomp at Rome.

It is impossible to read the descriptions of these arrogant exhibitions of prosperity, and not to be struck with indignation at this barbarous method of insulting the calamities of the unfortunate. One would be apt, at the first glance, to suspect that every sentiment of humanity must be extinguished in a people, who could behold with pleasure the

moving instances, which these solemnities afforded, of the caprice of fortune ; and could see the highest potentates of the earth dragged from their thrones to fill up the proud parade of these ungenerous triumphs. But the prevailing maxim which ran through the whole system of Roman politics, was to encourage a spirit of conquest ; and these honours were evidently calculated to awaken that unjust principle of mistaken patriotism. Accordingly, by the fundamental laws of Rome, no general was entitled to a triumph, unless he had added some new acquisition to her possessions. To suppress a civil insurrection, however dangerous ; to recover any former member of her dominions, however important ; gave no claim to this supreme mark of ambitious distinction. For it was their notion, it seems, (and Valerius Maximus is my authority for saying so) that there is as much difference between adding to the territories of a commonwealth, and restoring those it has lost, as between the actual conferring of a benefit, and the mere repelling of an injury. It was but of a piece, indeed, that a ceremony conducted in defiance of humanity, should be founded in contempt of justice ; and it was natural enough that they should gain by oppression what they were to enjoy by insult.

If we consider Paulus Æmilius, after his conquest of Macedonia, making his public entry into Rome, attended by the unfortunate Perseus and his infant family ; and at the same time reflect upon our Black Prince, when he passed through London with his royal captive, after the glorious battle of Poitiers ; we cannot fail of having the proper sentiments of a Roman triumph. What generous mind,

who saw the Roman consul in all the giddy exultation of unfeeling pride, but would rather (as to that single circumstance) have been the degraded Perseus, than the triumphant Æmilius? There is something, indeed, in distress that reflects a sort of merit upon every object which is so situated, and turns off our attention from those blemishes that stain even the most vicious characters. Accordingly, in the instance of which I am speaking, the perfidious monarch was overlooked in the suffering Perseus; and a spectacle so affecting checked the joy of conquest even in a Roman breast. For Plutarch assures us, when that worthless, but unhappy prince, was observed, together with his two sons and a daughter, marching amidst the train of prisoners, nature was too hard for custom, and many of the spectators melted into a flood of tears. But with what a generous tenderness did the British hero conduct himself upon an occasion of the same kind? He employed all the artful address of the most refined humanity, to conceal from this unhappy prisoner every thing that could remind him of his disgrace; and the whole pomp that was displayed upon this occasion, appeared singly as intended to lighten the weight of his misfortunes, and to do honour to the vanquished monarch.

You will remember, Palamedes, I am only considering the Romans in a political view, and speaking of them merely in their national character. As to individuals, you know, I pay the highest veneration to many that rose up amongst them. It would not, indeed, be just to involve particulars in general reflections of any kind: and I cannot but ac-

knowledge, ere I close my letter, that though, in the article I have been mentioning, the Romans certainly acted a most unworthy part towards their public enemies, yet they seem to have maintained the most exalted notions of conduct with respect to their private ones. That noble (and, may I not add, that Christian) sentiment of Juvenal,

. minuti

Semper et infirmi est animi exiguique voluptas,
Ultio—

was not merely the refined precept of their more improved philosophers, but a general and popular maxim among them; and that generous sentiment so much and so deservedly admired in the Roman orator; *Non pœnitent me mortales inimicitias, sempiternas amicitias habere*, was, as appears from Livy, so universally received as to become even a proverbial expression. Thus Sallust likewise, I remember, speaking of the virtues of the ancient Romans, mentions it as their principal characteristic, that, upon all occasions, they showed a disposition rather to forgive than revenge an injury. But the false notions they had embraced concerning the glory of their country, taught them to subdue every affection of humanity, and extinguish every dictate of justice which opposed that destructive principle. It was this spirit, however, in return, and by a very just consequence, that proved at length the means of their total destruction. Farewell. I am, &c.

IV. TO PHILOTES.

July 4, 1743.

WHILST you are probably enjoying blue skies and cooling grots, I am shivering here in the midst of summer.—The *molles sub arbore somni*, the *speculuncæ vivique lacus*, are pleasures which we in England can seldom taste but in description. For in a climate, where the warmest season is frequently little better than a milder sort of winter, the sun is much too welcome a guest to be avoided. If ever we have occasion to complain of him, it must be for his absence: at least, I have seldom found his visits troublesome. You see I am still the same cold mortal as when you left me: but whatever warmth I may want in my constitution, I want none in my affections; and you have not a friend who is more ardently yours, than I pretend to be. You have, indeed, such a right to my heart from mere gratitude, that I almost wish I owed you less upon that account, that I might give it you upon a more disinterested principle. However, if there is any part of it which you cannot demand in justice, be assured, you have it by affection; so that, on one or other of these titles, you may always depend upon me as wholly yours. Can it be necessary, after this, to add, that I received your letter with singular satisfaction, as it brought me an account of your welfare, and of the agreeable manner in which you pass your time? If there be any room to wish you an increase of pleasure, it is, perhaps, that the three virgins you mention, were a few degrees handsomer and younger. But I would not desire their charms should be height-

ened, were I not sure they will never lessen your repose; for knowing your stoicism, as I do, I dare trust your ease with any thing less than a goddess; and those females, I perceive, are so far removed from the order of divinities, that they seem to require a considerable advance before I could even allow them to be so much as women.

It was mentioned to me, the other day, that there is some probability we may see you in England by the winter. When I considered only my private satisfaction, I heard this with a very sensible pleasure: but as I have long learned to submit my own interests to yours, I could not but regret, there was a likelihood of your being so soon called off from one of the most advantageous opportunities of improvement that can attend a sensible mind. An ingenious Italian author, of your acquaintance, compares a judicious traveller to a river, which increases its stream the farther it flows from its source; or to certain springs, which, running through rich veins of mineral, improve their qualities as they pass along. It were pity then you should be checked in so useful a progress, and diverted from a course, from whence you may derive so many noble advantages. You have hitherto, I imagine, been able to do little more than lay in materials for your main design: but six months now, would give you a truer notion of what is worthy of observation in the countries through which you pass, than twice that time when you were less acquainted with the languages. The truth is, till a man is capable of conversing with ease among the natives of any country, he can never be able to form a just and adequate idea of their policy and man-

ners. He who sits at a play, without understanding the dialect, may, indeed, discover which of the actors are best dressed, and how well the scenes are painted or disposed ; but the characters and conduct of the drama must for ever remain a secret to him. Adieu. I am, &c.

V. TO CLYTANDER.

IF I had been a party in the conversation you mention, I should have joined, I believe, with your friend, in supporting those sentiments you seem to condemn. I will venture, indeed, to acknowledge, that I have long been of opinion, the moderns pay too blind a deference to the ancients ; and though I have the highest veneration for several of their remains, yet I am inclined to think, they have occasioned us the loss of some excellent originals. They are the proper and best guides, I allow, to those who have not the force to break out into new paths : but whilst it is thought sufficient praise to be their followers, genius is checked in her flights, and many a fair tract lies undiscovered in the boundless regions of imagination. Thus, had Virgil trusted more to his native strength, the Romans, perhaps, might have seen an original epic in their language ; but Homer was considered by that admired poet as the sacred object of his first and principal attention ; and he seemed to think it the noblest triumph of genius, to be adorned with the spoils of that glorious chief.

You will tell me, perhaps, that even Homer himself was indebted to the ancients ; that the full streams he dispensed did not flow from his own

source, but were derived to him from a higher. This, I acknowledge, has been asserted; but asserted without proof, and, I may venture to add, without probability. He seems to have stood alone and unsupported; and to have stood, for that very reason, so much the nobler object of admiration. Scarce, indeed, I imagine, would his works have received that high regard which was paid to them from their earliest appearance, had they been formed upon prior models; had they shone only with reflected light.

But will not this servile humour of subjecting the powers of invention to the guidance of the ancients, account, in some degree, at least, for our meeting with so small a number of authors who can claim the merit of being originals? Is not this a kind of submission, that damps the fire, and weakens the vigour of the mind? For the ancients seem to be considered by us, as so many guards to prevent the free excursions of imagination, and set bounds to her flight. Whereas, they ought rather to be looked upon (the few, I mean, who are themselves originals) as encouragements to a full and uncontrolled exertion of her faculties. But if here or there a poet has courage enough to trust to his own unassisted reach of thought, his example does not seem so much to incite others to make the same adventurous attempts, as to confirm them in the humble disposition of imitation: for if he succeeds, he immediately becomes himself the occasion of a thousand models: if he does not, he is pointed out as a discouraging instance of the folly of renouncing those established leaders which antiquity has authorised. Thus invention is depress-

ed, and genius enslaved; the creative power of poetry is lost; and the ingenious, instead of exerting that productive faculty, which alone can render them the just objects of admiration, are humbly contented with borrowing both the materials and the plans of their mimic structures. I am, &c.

VI. TO ORONTES.

March 10, 1729.

THERE is nothing, perhaps, wherein mankind are more frequently mistaken than in the judgments which they pass on each other. The stronger lines, indeed, in every man's character, must always be marked too clearly and distinctly to deceive even the most careless observer; and no one, I am persuaded, was ever esteemed in the general opinion of the world, as highly deficient in his moral or intellectual qualities, who did not justly merit his reputation. But I speak only of those more nice and delicate traits which distinguish the several degrees of probity and good sense, and ascertain the quantum (if I may so express it) of human merit. The powers of the soul are so often concealed by modesty, diffidence, timidity, and a thousand other accidental affections; and the nice complexion of her moral operations depends so entirely on those internal principles from whence they proceed, that those who form their notions of others by casual and distant views, must unavoidably be led into very erroneous judgments. Even Orontes, with all his candour and penetration, is not, I perceive, entirely secure from mistakes of this sort; and the sentiments you expressed in your last letter con-

cerning Varus, are by no means agreeable to the truth of his character.

It must be acknowledged, at the same time, that Varus is an exception to all general rules : neither his head nor his heart are exactly to be discovered by those indexes which are usually supposed to point directly to the genius and temper of other men. Thus, with a memory that will scarce serve him for the common purposes of life, with an imagination even more slow than his memory, and with an attention that could not carry him through the easiest proposition in Euclid ; he has a sound and excellent understanding, joined to a refined and exquisite taste. But the rectitude of his sentiments seems to arise less from reflection than sensation ; rather from certain suitable feelings, which the objects that present themselves to his consideration instantly occasion in his mind, than from the energy of any active faculties which he is capable of exerting for that purpose. His conversation is unentertaining ; for though he talks a great deal, all that he utters is delivered with labour and hesitation. Not that his ideas are really dark and confused ; but because he is never contented to convey them in the first words that occur. Like the orator mentioned by Tully, *metuens ne vitiosum colligeret, etiam verum sanguinem deperdebat*, he expresses himself ill by always endeavouring to express himself better. His reading cannot so properly be said to have rendered him knowing, as not ignorant : it has rather enlarged than filled his mind.

His temper is as singular as his genius ; and both equally mistaken by those who only know him

a little. If you were to judge of him by his general appearance, you would believe him incapable of all the more delicate sensations ; nevertheless, under a rough and boisterous behaviour, he conceals a heart full of tenderness and humanity. He has a sensibility of nature, indeed, beyond what I ever observed in any other man ; and I have often seen him affected by those little circumstances, which would make no impression on a mind of less exquisite feelings. This extreme sensibility in his temper influences his speculations as well as his actions ; and he hovers between various hypotheses without settling upon any, by giving importance to those minuter difficulties, which would not be strong enough to suspend a more active and vigorous mind. In a word, Varus is in the number of those whom it is impossible not to admire, or not to despise ; and, at the same time that he is the esteem of all his friends, he is the contempt of all his acquaintance. Adieu. I am, &c.

VII. TO HORTENSIVS.

YOUR excellent brawn wanted no additional recommendation to make it more acceptable, but that of your company. However, though I cannot share it with my friend, I devote it to his memory, and make daily offerings of it to a certain divinity, whose temples, though now well-nigh deserted, were once held in the highest veneration ; she is mentioned by ancient authors, under the name and title of *Diva Amicitia*. To her I bring the victim you have furnished me with, in all the pomp of Roman rites. Wreathed with the sacred *vitta*, and

crowned with the branch of rosemary, I place it on an altar of well-polished mahogany, where I pour libations over it of acid wine, and sprinkle it with flour of mustard. I deal out certain portions to those who assist at this social ceremony, reminding them, with an *hoc age*, of the important business upon which they are assembled ; and conclude the festival with this votive couplet :

Close as this brawn the circling fillet binds,
May friendship's sacred bands unite our minds !

Farewell. I am, &c.

VIII. TO CLYTANDER.

July 2, 1736.

You must have been greatly distressed, indeed, Clytander, when you thought of calling me in as your auxiliary, in the debate you mention. Or was it not rather a motive of generosity which suggested that design ? and you were willing, perhaps, I should share the glory of a victory which you had already secured. Whatever your intention was, mine is always to comply with your requests ; and I very readily enter the lists, when I am at once to combat in the cause of truth, and on the side of my friend.

It is not necessary, I think, in order to establish the credibility of a particular Providence, to deduce it (as your objector, I find, seems to require) from known and undisputed facts. I should be exceedingly cautious in pointing out any supposed instances of that kind ; as those who are fond of indulging themselves in determining the precise cases wherein they imagine the immediate interposition of the Divinity is discoverable, often run into the

weakest and most injurious superstitions. It is impossible, indeed, unless we were capable of looking through the whole chain of things, and of viewing each effect in its remote connexions and final issues, to pronounce of any contingency, that it is absolutely, and, in its ultimate tendencies, either good or bad. That can only be known by the great Author of nature, who comprehends the full extent of our total existence, and sees the influence which every particular circumstance will have in the general sum of our happiness. But though the peculiar points of divine interposition are thus necessarily, and from the natural imperfection of our discerning faculties, extremely dubious; yet it can by no means from thence be justly inferred, that the doctrine of a particular Providence is either groundless or absurd: the general principle may be true, though the application of it to any given purpose be involved in very inextricable difficulties.

The notion, that the material world is governed by general mechanical laws, has induced your friend to argue that "it is probable the Deity should act by the same rule of conduct in the intellectual; and leave moral agents entirely to those consequences which necessarily result from the particular exercise of their original powers." But this hypothesis takes a question for granted, which requires much proof before it can be admitted. The grand principle which preserves this system of the universe in all its harmonious order, is gravity, or that property by which all the particles of matter mutually tend to each other. Now this is a power which, it is acknowledged, does not essentially re-

side in matter, but must be ultimately derived from the action of some immaterial cause. Why, therefore, may it not reasonably be supposed, to be the effect of the divine agency, immediately and constantly operating for the preservation of this wonderful machine of nature? Certain, at least, it is, that the explication which sir Isaac Newton has endeavoured to give of this wonderful phenomenon, by means of his subtil ether, has not afforded universal satisfaction: and it is the opinion of a very great writer, who seems to have gone far into inquiries of this abstruse kind, that the numberless effects of this power are inexplicable upon mechanical principles, or in any other way than by having recourse to a spiritual agent, who connects, moves, and disposes all things according to such methods as best comport with his incomprehensible purposes.

But successful villany and oppressed virtue are deemed, I perceive, in the account of your friend, as powerful instances to prove that the Supreme Being remains an uninterposing spectator of what is transacted upon this theatre of the world. However, ere this argument can have a determining weight, it must be proved (which yet, surely, never can be proved) that prosperous iniquity has all those advantages in reality, which it may seem to have in appearance; and that those accidents which are usually esteemed as calamities, do, in truth, and in the just scale of things, deserve to be distinguished by that appellation. It is a noble saying of the philosopher, cited by Seneca, that “there cannot be a more unhappy man in the world than he who has never experienced adver-

sity." There is nothing, perhaps, in which mankind are more apt to make false calculations, than in the article both of their own happiness and that of others; as there are few I believe, who have lived any time in the world, but have found frequent occasions to say with the poor hunted stag in the fable, who was entangled by those horns he had but just before been admiring:

O me infelicem ! qui nunc demum intelligo
Ut illa mihi profuerint quæ despexeram,
Et quæ laudâram, quantum luctûs habuerint !—*Phæd.*

If we look back upon the sentiments of past ages, we shall find the opinion for which I am contending has prevailed from the remotest account of time. It must undoubtedly have entered the world as early as religion herself; since all institutions of that kind must necessarily be founded upon the supposition of a particular Providence. It appears, indeed, to have been the favourite doctrine of some of the most distinguished names in antiquity.—Xenophon tells us, when Cyrus led out his army against the Assyrians, the word which he gave to his soldiers was, ΖΕΤΣ ΣΤΗΜΜΑΧΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΗΓΕΜΩΝ, "Jupiter the defender and conductor:" and he represents that prince as attributing success, even in the sports of the field, to Divine Providence. Thus, likewise, Timoleon, as the author of his life assures us, believed every action of mankind to be under the immediate influence of the gods: and Livy remarks of the first Scipio Africanus, that he never undertook any important affair, either of private or public concern, without going to the Capitol

in order to implore the assistance of Jupiter. Balbus, the Stoic, in the dialogue on the Nature of the Gods, expressly declares for a particular providence : and Cicero himself, in one of his orations, imputes that superior glory which attended the Roman nation, singly to this animating persuasion. But none of the ancients seem to have had a stronger impression of this truth upon their minds, than the immortal Homer. Every page in the works of that divine poet will furnish proofs of this observation. I cannot, however, forbear mentioning one or two remarkable instances, which just now occur to me. When the Grecian chiefs cast lots which of them should accept the challenge of Hector, the poet describes the army as lifting up their eyes and hands to heaven, and imploring the gods that they would direct the lot to fall on one of their most distinguished heroes :

Λαοι,—θεοισι δε χειρας ανεσχον,
Ωδε τις ειπεσκεν, ιδων εις ουρανον ευρυν,
Ζευ πατερ, η Αιαντα λαχειν, η Τυδεος υιον,
Η αυτον Βασιληα πολυχρυσοιο Μυκηνης.*

So likewise Antenor proposes to the Trojans the restitution of Helen, as having no hopes, he tells them, that any thing would succeed with them after they had broken the faith of treaties :

* The people pray with lifted eyes and hands,
And vows like these ascend from all the bands :
Grant, thou, Almighty, in whose hand is fate,
A worthy champion for the Grecian state :
This task let Ajax or Tydides prove,
Or he, the king of kings, beloved of Jove.—*Pope.*

νυν ορκια πιστα
 Ψευσαμενοι μαχομεσθα· τω ου νυ τι κερδιον ημιν
 Ελπομαι εκτελεεσθαι.*

And indeed Homer hardly ever makes his heroes succeed (as his excellent translator justly observes) unless they have first offered a prayer to Heaven. “He is perpetually,” says Mr. Pope, “acknowledging the hand of God in all events, and ascribing to that alone all the victories, triumphs, rewards, or punishments of men. The grand moral laid down at the entrance of his poem, Διός δ’ ἐτελείετο βουλή, The will of God was fulfilled, runs through his whole work, and is, with a most remarkable care and conduct, put into the mouths of his greatest and wisest persons on every occasion.”

Upon the whole, Clytander, we may safely assert, that the belief of a particular providence is founded upon such probable reasons as may well justify our assent. It would scarce, therefore, be wise to renounce an opinion, which affords so firm a support to the soul in those seasons wherein she stands most in need of assistance, merely because it is not possible, in questions of this kind, to solve every difficulty which attends them. If it be highly consonant to the general notions of the benevolence of the Deity (as highly consonant it surely is) that he should not leave so impotent a creature as man to the single guidance of his own precarious faculties; who would abandon a belief so full of the most enlivening consolation, in compliance with

* The ties of faith, the sworn alliance broke,
 Our impious battles the just gods provoke.—*Pope.*

those metaphysical reasonings which are usually calculated rather to silence, than to satisfy, an humble inquirer after truth? Who indeed would wish to be convinced, that he stands unguarded by that heavenly shield, which can protect him against all the assaults of an injurious and malevolent world? The truth is, the belief of a particular providence is the most animating persuasion that the mind of man can embrace; it gives strength to our hopes, and firmness to our resolutions; it subdues the insolence of prosperity, and draws out the sting of affliction. In a word, it is like the golden branch to which Virgil's hero was directed, and affords the only secure passport through the regions of darkness and sorrow. I am, &c.

IX. TO TIMOCLEA.

July 29, 1748.

It is with wonderful satisfaction I find you are grown such an adept in the occult arts, and that you take a laudable pleasure in the ancient and ingenious study of making and solving riddles. It is a science, undoubtedly, of most necessary acquirement, and deserves to make a part in the education of both sexes. Those of yours may by this means very innocently indulge their usual curiosity of discovering and disclosing a secret; whilst such amongst ours who have a turn for deep speculations, and are fond of puzzling themselves and others, may exercise their faculties this way with much private satisfaction, and without the least disturbance to the public. It is an art, indeed, which I would recommend to the encouragement

of both the universities, as it affords the easiest and shortest method of conveying some of the most useful principles of logic, and might therefore be introduced as a very proper substitute in the room of those dry systems, which are at present in vogue in those places of education. For, as it consists in discovering truth under borrowed appearances, it might prove of wonderful advantage in every branch of learning, by habituating the mind to separate all foreign ideas, and consequently preserving it from that grand source of error, the being deceived by false connexions. In short, Timoclea, this your favourite science contains the sum of all human policy; and as there is no passing through the world without sometimes mixing with fools and knaves; who would not choose to be master of the enigmatical art, in order, on proper occasions, to be able to lead aside craft and impertinence from their aim, by the convenient artifice of a prudent disguise? It was the maxim of a very wise prince, that "he who knows not how to dissemble, knows not how to reign;" and I desire you would receive it as mine, that "he who knows not how to riddle, knows not how to live."

But besides the general usefulness of this art, it will have a further recommendation to all true admirers of antiquity, as being practised by the most considerable personages of early times. It is almost three thousand years ago since Samson proposed his famous riddle so well known; though the advocates for ancient learning must forgive me, if in this article I attribute the superiority to the moderns: for if we may judge of the skill of the former

in this profound art, by that remarkable specimen of it, the geniuses of those early ages were by no means equal to those which our times have produced. But, as a friend of mine has lately finished, and intends very shortly to publish, a most curious work in folio, wherein he has fully proved that important point, I will not anticipate the pleasure you will receive by perusing his ingenious performance. In the mean while let it be remembered to the immortal glory of this art, that the wisest man, as well as the greatest prince that ever lived, is said to have amused himself and a neighbouring monarch in trying the strength of each other's talents in this way; several riddles, it seems, having passed between Solomon and Hiram, upon condition that he who failed in the solution should incur a certain penalty. It is recorded, likewise, of the great father of poetry, even the divine Homer himself, that he had a taste of this sort; and we are told, by a Greek writer of his life, that he died with vexation for not being able to discover a riddle, which was proposed to him by some fisherman at a certain island called Iö.

I am inclined to think, indeed, that the ancients in general were such admirers of this art, as to inscribe riddles upon their tombstones, and that, not satisfied with puzzling the world in their life time, they bequeathed enigmatical legacies to the public after their decease. My conjecture is founded upon an ancient inscription, which I will venture to quote to you, though it is in Latin, as your friend and neighbour the antiquarian, will, I am persuaded, be very glad of obliging you with a dissertation

upon it. Be pleased then to ask him, whether he does not think that the following inscription favours my sentiments :

VIATORES. OPTIMI.

HIS. NVGIS. GRYPHIS. AMBAGIBVSQVE.

MEIS. CONDONARE. POSCIMUS.

However this may be, it is certain that it was one of the great entertainments of the pastoral life, and therefore, if for no other reason, highly deserving the attention of our modern Arcadians. You remember, I dare say, the riddle which the shepherd Dametas proposes to Mænalcas, in Dryden's Virgil :

Say where the round of heaven, which all contains,
To three short ells on earth our sight restrains :
Tell that, and rise a Phœbus for thy pains.

This ænigma, which has exercised the guesses of many a learned critic, remains yet unexplained ; which I mention not only as an instance of the wonderful penetration which is necessary to render a man a complete adept in this most noble science, but as an incitement to you to employ your skill in attempting the solution. And now, Timoclea, what will your grave friend say, who reproached you, it seems, for your riddling genius, when he shall find you are thus able to defend your favourite study by the lofty examples of kings, commentators, and poets ? I am, &c.

X. TO PHIDIPPUS.

HARDLY, I imagine, were you in earnest, when you required my thoughts upon friendship : for to

give you the truest idea of that generous intercourse, may I not justly refer you back to the sentiments of your own heart? I am sure, at least, I have learned to improve my own notions of that refined affection, by those instances which I have observed in yourself; as it is from thence I have received the clearest conviction, that it derives all its strength and stability from virtue and good sense.

There is not, perhaps, a quality more uncommon in the world, than that which is necessary to form a man for this refined commerce: for however sociableness may be esteemed a just characteristic of our species, friendliness, I am persuaded, will scarce be found to enter into its general definition. The qualifications requisite to support and conduct friendship in all its strength and extent, do not seem to be sufficiently diffused among the human race, to render them the distinguishing marks of mankind, unless generosity and good sense should be allowed (what they never can be allowed) universally to prevail. On the contrary, how few are in possession of those most amiable of endowments! How few are capable of that noble elevation of mind, which raises a man above those little jealousies and rivalships that shoot up in the paths of common amities!

We should not, indeed, so often hear complaints of the inconstancy and falseness of friends, if the world in general were more cautious than they usually are, in forming connexions of this kind. But the misfortune is, our friendships are apt to be too forward, and thus either fall off in the blossom, or never arrive at just maturity. It is an ex-

cellent piece of advice, therefore, that the poet Martial gives upon this occasion :

Tu tantum inspice, qui *novus* paratur,
An possit fieri *vetus* sodalis.

Were I to make trial of any person's qualifications for an union of so much delicacy, there is no part of his conduct I would sooner single out, than to observe him in his resentments. And this not upon the maxim frequently advanced, "that the best friends make the bitterest enemies;" but, on the contrary, because I am persuaded that he who is capable of being a bitter enemy can never possess the necessary virtues that constitute a true friend. For must he not want generosity (that most essential principle of an amicable combination) who can be so mean as to indulge a spirit of settled revenge, and coolly triumph in the oppression of an adversary? Accordingly, there is no circumstance in the character of the excellent Agricola that gives me a higher notion of the true heroism of his mind, than what the historian of his life mentions concerning his conduct in this particular instance : *Ex iracundiâ* (says Tacitus) *nihil supererat : secretum et silentium ejus non timeres*. His elevated spirit was too great to suffer his resentment to survive the occasion of it; and those who provoked his indignation had nothing to apprehend from the secret and silent workings of unextinguished malice. But the practice, it must be owned, (perhaps I might have said the principle too) of the world runs strongly on the side of the contrary disposition; and thus, in opposition to that generous sentiment of your admired orator, which I have so often heard

you quote with applause, our friendships are mortal, whilst it is our enmities only that never die.

But though judgment must collect the materials of this goodly structure, it is affection that gives the cement; and passion as well as reason should concur in forming a firm and lasting coalition. Hence, perhaps, it is, that not only the most powerful, but the most lasting friendships are usually the produce of the early season of our lives, when we are most susceptible of the warm and affectionate impressions. The connexions into which we enter in any after period, decrease in strength, as our passions abate in heat; and there is not, I believe, a single instance of a vigorous friendship that ever struck root in a bosom chilled by years. How irretrievable then is the loss of those best and fairest acquisitions of our youth! Seneca, taking notice of Augustus Cæsar's lamenting, upon a certain occasion, the death of Mæcenas and Agrippa, observes, that he who could instantly repair the destruction of whole fleets and armies, and bid Rome, after a general conflagration, rise out of her ashes even with more lustre than before; was yet unable, during a whole life, to fill up those lasting vacancies in his friendship: a reflection which reminds me of renewing my solicitations, that you would be more cautious in hazarding a life which I have so many reasons to love and honour.—For whenever an accident of the same kind shall separate (and what other accident can separate?) the happy union which has so long subsisted between us, where shall I retrieve so severe a loss? I am utterly indisposed to enter into new habitudes, and extend the little circle of my friendships; happy if I may but preserve

it firm and unbroken to the closing moment of my life! Adieu. I am, &c.

XI. TO HORTENSIVS.

Aug. 12, 1742.

IF any thing could tempt me to read the Latin poem you mention, it would be your recommendation. But shall I venture to own, that I have no taste for modern compositions of that kind? There is one prejudice which always remains with me against them, and which I have never yet found cause to renounce: no true genius, I am persuaded, would submit to write any considerable poem in a dead language. A poet, who glows with the genuine fire of a warm and lively imagination, will find the copiousness of his own native English scarce sufficient to convey his ideas in all their strength and energy. The most comprehensive language sinks under the weight of great conceptions; and a pregnant imagination disdains to stint the natural growth of her thoughts to the confined standard of classical expression. An ordinary genius, indeed, may be humbly contented to pursue words through indexes and dictionaries, and tamely borrow phrases from Horace and Virgil; but could the elevated invention of Milton, or the brilliant sense of Pope, have ingloriously submitted to lower the force and majesty of the most exalted and nervous sentiments, to the scanty measure of the Roman dialect? For copiousness is by no means in the number of those advantages which attend the Latin language; as many of the ancients have both confessed and lamented. Thus Lucretius and Seneca complain of its deficiency with respect to subjects of philosophy;

as Pliny the younger owns he found it incapable of furnishing him with proper terms, in compositions of wit and humour. But if the Romans themselves found their language thus penurious, in its entire and most ample supplies, how much more contracted must it be to us, who are only in possession of its broken and scattered remains?

To say truth, I have observed, in most of the modern Latin poems which I have accidentally run over, a remarkable barrenness of sentiment, and have generally found the poet degraded into the parodist. It is usually the little dealers on Parnassus, who have not a sufficient stock of genius to launch out into a more enlarged commerce with the Muses, that hawk about these classical gleanings. The style of these performances always puts me in mind of Harlequin's snuff, which he collected by borrowing a pinch out of every man's box he could meet, and then retailed it to his customers under the pompous title of *tabac de mille fleurs*. Half a line from Virgil or Lucretius, pieced out with a bit from Horace or Juvenal, is generally the motley mixture which enters into compositions of this sort. One may apply to these jack-daw poets, with their stolen feathers, what Martial says to a contemporary plagiarist :

Stat contra, dicitque tibi tua pagina: Fur es.

This kind of theft, indeed, every man must necessarily commit, who sets up for a poet in a dead language. For, to express himself with propriety, he must not only be sure that every single word which he uses is authorised by the best writers, but he must not even venture to throw them out of that

particular combination in which he finds them connected; otherwise he may run into the most barbarous solecisms. To explain my meaning by an instance from modern language: the French words *arene* and *rive*, are both to be met with in their approved authors; and, yet if a foreigner, unacquainted with the niceties of that language, should take the liberty of bringing those two words together, as in the following verse:

Sur la rive du fleuve amassant de l'arcne;

he would be exposed to the ridicule, not only of the critics, but of the most ordinary mechanic in Paris. For the idiom of the French tongue will not admit of the expression *sur la rive du fleuve*, but requires the phrase *sur le bord de la riviere*; as they never say *amasser de l'arene*, but *du sable*. The same observation may be extended to all languages, whether living or dead. But as no reasonings from analogy can be of the least force in determining the idiomatic proprieties of any language whatsoever; a modern Latin poet has no other method of being sure of avoiding absurdities of this kind, than to take whole phrases as he finds them formed to his hands. Thus, instead of accommodating his expression to his sentiment, (if any he should have) he must necessarily bend his sentiment to his expression, as he is not at liberty to strike out into that boldness of style, and those unexpected combinations of words, which give such grace and energy to the thoughts of every true genius. True genius, indeed, is as much discovered by style, as by any other distinction; and every eminent writer, without indulging any unwarranted licences, has a lan-

guage which he derives from himself, and which is peculiarly and literally his own.

I would recommend, therefore, to these empty echoes of the ancients, which owe their voice to the ruins of Rome, the advice of an old philosopher to an affected orator of his times: *Vive moribus præteritis*, said he, *loquere verbis præsentibus*. Let these poets form their conduct, if they please, by the manners of the ancients; but if they would prove their genius, it must be by the language of the moderns. I would not, however, have you imagine, that I exclude all merit from a qualification of this kind. To be skilled in the mechanism of Latin verse, is a talent, I confess, extremely worthy of a pedagogue; as it is an exercise of singular advantage to his pupils. Adieu! I am, &c.

XII. TO AMASIA.

July 8, 1744.

IF good manners will not justify my long silence, policy at least will: and you must confess, that there is some prudence in not owning a debt one is incapable of paying. I have the mortification, indeed, to find myself engaged in a commerce, which I have not a sufficient fund to support, though I must add, at the same time, if you expect an equal return of entertainment, for that which your letters afford, I know not where you will find a correspondent. You will scarcely, at least, look for him in the desert, or hope for any thing very lively from a man who is obliged to seek his companions among the dead. You who dwell in a land flowing with mirth and good-humour, meet with many a gallant occurrence worthy of record: but what can

a village produce, which is more famous for repose than for action; and is so much behind the manners of the present age, as scarce to have got out of the simplicity of the first? The utmost of our humour rises no higher than Punch; and all that we know of assemblies, is once a year round our may-pole. Thus, unqualified as I am, to contribute to your amusement, I am as much at a loss to supply my own; and am obliged to have recourse to a thousand stratagems, to help me off with those lingering hours, which run so swiftly, it seems, by you. As one cannot always, you know, be playing at push-pin, I sometimes employ myself with a less philosophical diversion; and either pursue butterflies, or hunt rhymes, as the weather and the seasons permit. This morning not proving very favourable to my sports of the field, I contented myself with those under covert; and as I am not at present supplied with any thing better for your entertainment, will you suffer me to set before you some of my game?

A TALE.

Ere Saturn's sons were yet disgraced,
And heathen gods were all the taste,
Full oft (we read) 'twas Jove's high will
To take the air on Ida's hill.
It chanced, as once, with serious ken,
He view'd from thence the ways of men,
He saw (and pity touch'd his breast)
The world by three foul fiends possess'd.
Pale *Discord* there, and *Folly* vain,
With haggard *Vice*, upheld their reign.
Then forth he sent his summons high,
And call'd a senate of the sky.

Round as the winged orders press'd,
Jove thus his sacred mind express'd :
“ Say, which of all this shining train,
Will *Virtue's* conflict hard sustain ?
For see ! she drooping takes her flight,
While not a god supports her right.”
He paused—when, from amidst the sky,
Wit, Innocence, and Harmony,
With one united zeal arose,
The triple tyrants to oppose.
That instant, from the realms of day,
With generous speed they took their way ;
To Britain's isle direct their car,
And enter'd with the evening star.

Beside the road a mansion stood,
Defended by a circling wood.
Hither, disguised, their steps they bend,
In hopes, perchance, to find a friend.
Nor vain their hope ; for records say,
Worth ne'er from thence was turn'd away.
They urge the traveller's common chance,
And every piteous plea advance.
The artful tale that *Wit* had feign'd,
Admittance easy soon obtain'd.

The dame who own'd, adorn'd the place ;
Three blooming daughters added grace :
The first, with gentlest manners bless'd,
And temper sweet, each heart possess'd ;
Who view'd her catch'd the tender flame ;
And soft Amasia was her name.
In sprightly sense and polish'd air,
What maid with Mira might compare ?
While Lucia's eyes and Lucia's lyre
Did unresisted love inspire.

Imagine now the table clear,
And mirth in every face appear :
The song, the tale, the jest went round,
The riddle dark, the trick profound.
Thus each admiring and admired,
The hosts and guests at length retired :

When *Wit* thus spake her sister-train:—
 “Faith, friends, our errand is but vain.
 Quick let us measure back the sky;
 These nymphs alone may well supply
Wit, Innocence, and Harmony.”

You see to what expedient solitude has reduced me, when I am thus forced to string rhymes as boys do birds' eggs, in order to while away my idle hours. But a gayer scene is, I trust, approaching, and the day will shortly, I hope, arrive, when I shall only complain that it steals away too fast. It is not from any improvement in the objects which surround me, that I expect this wondrous change; nor yet that a longer familiarity will render them more agreeable. It is from a promise I received, that Amasia will visit the hermit in his cell, and disperse the gloom of a solitaire by the cheerfulness of her conversation. What inducements shall I mention, to prevail with you to hasten that day? Shall I tell you that I have a bower over-arched with jessamine? that I have an oak, which is the favourite haunt of a Dryad? that I have a plantation which flourishes with all the verdure of May in the midst of all the cold of December? Or, may I not hope that I have something still more prevailing with you than all these, as I can with truth assure you, that I have a heart which is faithfully yours, &c.

XIII. TO PHILOTES.

AMONG all the advantages which attend friendship, there is not one more valuable, than the liberty it admits in laying open the various affections of one's

mind, without reserve or disguise. There is something in disclosing to a friend the occasional emotions of one's heart, that wonderfully contributes to soothe and allay its perturbations, in all its most pensive or anxious moments. Nature, indeed, seems to have cast us with a general disposition to communication; though, at the same time, it must be acknowledged, there are few to whom one may safely be communicative. Have I not reason, then, to esteem it as one of the most desirable circumstances of my life, that I dare, without scruple or danger, think aloud to Philotes? It is merely to exercise that happy privilege I now take up my pen; and you must expect nothing in this letter but the picture of my heart in one of its splenetic hours. There are certain seasons, perhaps, in every man's life, when he is dissatisfied with himself and every thing around him, without being able to give a substantial reason for being so. At least, I am unwilling to think that this dark cloud, which at present hangs over my mind, is peculiar to my constitution, and never gathers in any breast but my own. It is much more, however, my concern to dissipate this vapour in myself, than to discover that it sometimes arises in others: as there is no disposition a man would rather endeavour to cherish, than a constant aptitude of being pleased: but my practice will not always credit my philosophy, and I find it much easier to point out my distemper than to remove it. After all, is it not a mortifying consideration, that the powers of reason should be less prevalent than those of matter; and that a page of Seneca cannot raise the spirits, when a pint of claret will? It might, methinks, somewhat

abate the insolence of human pride, to consider, that it is but increasing or diminishing the velocity of certain fluids in the animal machine, to elate the soul with the gayest hopes, or sink her into the deepest despair; to depress the hero into a coward, or advance the coward into a hero. It is to some such mechanical cause I am inclined to attribute the present gloominess of my mind: at the same time, I will confess, there is something in that very consideration, which gives strength to the fit, and renders it so much the more difficult to throw off. For, tell me, is it not a discouraging reflection to find one's self "servile," as Shakespeare expresses it, "to every skyey influence," and the sport of every paltry atom? to owe the ease of one's mind, not only to the disposition of one's own body, but almost to that of every other which surrounds us? Adieu. I am, &c.

XIV. TO ORONTES.

THE passage you quote is entirely in my sentiments. I agree both with that celebrated author and yourself, that our oratory is by no means in a state of perfection; and, though it has much strength and solidity, that it may yet be rendered far more polished and affecting. The growth, indeed, of eloquence, even in those countries where she flourished most, has ever been exceedingly slow. Athens had been in possession of all the other polite improvements, long before her pretensions to the persuasive arts were in any degree considerable; as the earliest orator of note among the Ro-

mans did not appear sooner than about a century before Tully.

That great master of persuasion, taking notice of this remarkable circumstance, assigns it as an evidence of the superior difficulty of his favourite art. Possibly there may be some truth in the observation; but whatever the cause be, the fact, I believe, is undeniable. Accordingly, eloquence has by no means made equal advances in our own country, with her sister arts; and though we have seen some excellent poets, and a few good painters, rise up amongst us, yet I know not whether our nation can supply us with a single orator of deserved eminence. One cannot but be surprised at this, when it is considered that we have a profession set apart for the purposes of persuasion; and which not only affords the most animating and interesting topics of rhetoric, but wherein a talent of this kind would prove the likeliest, perhaps, of any other to obtain those ambitious prizes, which were thought to contribute so much to the successful progress of ancient eloquence.

Among the principal defects of our English orators, their general disregard of harmony has, I think, been the least observed. It would be injustice, indeed, to deny that we have some performances of this kind amongst us, tolerably musical; but it must be acknowledged, at the same time, that it is more the effect of accident than design, and rather a proof of the power of our language, than of the art of our orators.

Dr. Tillotson, who is frequently mentioned as having carried this species of eloquence to its high-

est perfection, seems to have had no sort of notion of rhetorical numbers : and may I venture, Orontes, to add, without hazarding the imputation of an affected singularity, that I think no man had ever less pretensions to genuine oratory, than this celebrated preacher ? If any thing could raise a flame of eloquence in the breast of an orator, there is no occasion upon which, one should imagine, it would be more likely to break out, than in celebrating departed merit : yet, the two sermons which he preached upon the death of Mr. Gouge and Dr. Whichcote are as cold and languid performances, as were ever, perhaps, produced upon such an animating subject. One cannot, indeed, but regret, that he who abounds with such noble and generous sentiments, should want the art of setting them off with all the advantage they deserve ; that the sublime in morals should not be attended with a suitable elevation of language. The truth, however, is, his words are frequently ill-chosen, and almost always ill-placed ; his periods are both tedious and unharmonious, as his metaphors are generally mean, and often ridiculous. It were easy to produce numberless instances in support of this assertion. Thus, in his sermon preached before queen Anne, when she was princess of Denmark, he talks of squeezing a parable, thrusting religion by, driving a strict bargain with God, sharking shifts, &c. and, speaking of the day of judgment, he describes the world as cracking about our ears. I cannot, however, but acknowledge, in justice to the oratorical character of this most valuable prelate, that there is a noble simplicity in some few of his ser-

mons, as his excellent discourse on *Sincerity* deserves to be mentioned with particular applause.

But to show his deficiency in the article I am considering at present, the following stricture will be sufficient, among many others that might be cited to the same purpose. "One might be apt," says he, "to think, at first view, that this parable was overdone, and wanted something of a due decorum; it being hardly credible, that a man, after he had been so mercifully and generously dealt withal, as upon his humble request to have so huge a debt so freely forgiven, should, whilst the memory of so much mercy was fresh upon him, even in the very next moment, handle his fellow-servant, who had made the same humble request to him which he had done to his Lord, with so much roughness and cruelty for so inconsiderable a sum."

This whole period (not to mention other objections which might justly be raised against it) is unmusical throughout; but the concluding members, which ought to have been particularly flowing, are most miserably loose and disjointed. If the delicacy of Tully's ear was so exquisitely refined, as not always to be satisfied even when he read Demosthenes, how would it have been offended at the harshness and dissonance of so unharmonious a sentence!

Nothing, perhaps, throws our eloquence at a greater distance from that of the ancients, than this Gothic arrangement; as those wonderful effects, which sometimes attended their elocution, were, in all probability, chiefly owing to their skill in

musical concords. It was by the charm of numbers, united with the strength of reason, that Tully confounded the audacious Catiline, and silenced the eloquent Hortensius. It was this that deprived Curio of all power of recollection, when he rose up to oppose that great master of enchanting rhetoric: it was this, in a word, made even Cæsar himself tremble; nay, what is yet more extraordinary, made Cæsar alter his determined purpose, and acquit the man he had resolved to condemn.

You will not suspect that I attribute too much to the power of numerous composition, when you recollect the instance which Tully produces of its wonderful effect. He informs us, you may remember, in one of his rhetorical treatises, that he was himself a witness of its influence, as Carbo was once haranguing to the people. When that orator pronounced the following sentence—*patris dictum sapiens temeritas filii comprobavit*—it was astonishing, says he, to observe the general applause which followed that harmonious close. A modern ear, perhaps, would not be much affected upon this occasion; and, indeed, it is more than probable, that we are ignorant of the art of pronouncing that period with its genuine emphasis and cadence. We are certain, however, that the music of it consisted in the *dichoree* with which it is terminated: for Cicero himself assures us, that if the final measure had been changed, and the words placed in a different order, their whole effect would have been absolutely destroyed.

This art was first introduced among the Greeks by Thrasy-machus, though some of the admirers of Isocrates attributed the invention to that orator. It

does not appear to have been observed by the Romans till near the times of Tully, and even then it was by no means universally received. The ancient and less numerous manner of composition had still many admirers, who were such enthusiasts to antiquity as to adopt her very defects. A disposition of the same kind may, perhaps, prevent its being received with us; and while the archbishop shall maintain his authority as an orator, it is not to be expected that any great advancement will be made in this species of eloquence. That strength of understanding, likewise, and solidity of reason, which is so eminently our national characteristic, may add somewhat to the difficulty of reconciling us to a study of this kind; as at first glance it may seem to lead an orator from his grand and principal aim, and tempt him to make a sacrifice of sense to sound. It must be acknowledged, indeed, that in the times which succeeded the dissolution of the Roman republic, this art was so perverted from its true end, as to become the single study of their enervated orators. Pliny the younger often complains of this contemptible affectation; and the polite author of that elegant dialogue, which, with very little probability, is attributed either to Tacitus or Quintilian, assures us it was the ridiculous boast of certain orators, in the time of the declension of genuine eloquence, that their harangues were capable of being set to music, and sung upon the stage. But it must be remembered, that the true end of this art I am recommending, is to aid, not to supersede reason; that it is so far from being necessarily effeminate, that it not only adds grace but strength to the powers of persuasion. For

this purpose, Tully and Quintilian, those great masters of numerous composition, have laid it down as a fixed and invariable rule that it must never appear the effect of labour in the orator; that the tuneful flow of his periods must always seem the casual result of their disposition; and that it is the highest offence against the art, to weaken the expression, in order to give a more musical tone to the cadence: in short, that no unmeaning words are to be thrown in merely to fill up the requisite measure, but that they must still rise in sense as they improve in sound. I am, &c.

XV. TO CLEORA.

Aug. 11, 1738.

THOUGH it is but a few hours since I parted from my Cleora, yet I have already, you see, taken up my pen to write to her. You must not expect, however, in this, or in any of my future letters, that I say fine things to you; since I only intend to tell you true ones. My heart is too full to be regular, and too sincere to be ceremonious. I have changed the manner, not the style of my former conversations: and I write to you, as I used to talk to you, without form or art. Tell me then, with the same undissembled sincerity, what effect this absence has upon your usual cheerfulness? as I will honestly confess, on my own part, that I am too interested to wish a circumstance, so little consistent with my own repose, should be altogether reconcilable to yours. I have attempted, however, to pursue your advice, and divert myself by the subject you recommended to my thoughts: but it is impossible, I perceive, to turn off the mind at once from an ob-

ject which it has long dwelt upon with pleasure. My heart, like a poor bird which is hunted from her nest, is still returning to the place of its affections, and after some vain efforts to fly off, settles again where all its cares and all its tenderness are centred. Adieu.

XVI. TO PHILOTES.

Aug. 20, 1739.

I FEAR I shall lose all my credit with you as a gardener, by this specimen which I venture to send you of the produce of my walls. The snails, indeed, have had more than their share of my peaches and nectarines this season: but will you not smile when I tell you, that I deem it a sort of cruelty to suffer them to be destroyed? I should scarce dare to acknowledge this weakness (as the generality of the world, no doubt, would call it) had I not experienced, by many agreeable instances, that I may safely lay open to you every sentiment of my heart. To confess the truth, then, I have some scruples with respect to the liberty we assume in the *unlimited* destruction of these lower orders of existence. I know not upon what principle of reason and justice it is, that mankind have founded their right over the lives of every creature that is placed in a subordinate rank of being to themselves. Whatever claim they may have in right of food and self-defence, did they extend their privilege no farther than those articles would reasonably carry them, numberless beings might enjoy their lives in peace, who are now hurried out of them by the most wanton and unnecessary cruelties. I cannot, indeed, discover why it should be thought less in-

human to crush to death a harmless insect, whose single offence is that he eats that food which nature has prepared for its sustenance, than it would be, were I to kill any more bulky creature for the same reason. There are few tempers so hardened to the impressions of humanity, as not to shudder at the thought of the latter; and yet the former is universally practised without the least check of compassion. This seems to arise from the gross error of supposing that every creature is really in itself contemptible, which happens to be clothed with a body infinitely disproportionate to our own; not considering that *great* and *little* are merely relative terms. But the inimitable Shakspeare would teach us, that

——— the poor beetle, that we tread upon,
In corporal sufferance, feels a pang as great
As when a giant dies.

And this is not thrown out in the latitude of poetical imagination, but supported by the discoveries of the most improved philosophy; for there is every reason to believe that the sensations of many insects are as exquisite as those of creatures of far more enlarged dimensions; perhaps even more so. The millepedes, for instance, rolls itself round, upon the slightest touch; and the snail gathers in her horns upon the least approach of your hand. Are not these the strongest indications of their sensibility? and is it any evidence of ours, that we are not therefore induced to treat them with a more sympathizing tenderness?

I was extremely pleased with a sentiment I met with the other day in honest Montagne. That

good-natured author remarks, that there is a certain general claim of kindness and benevolence which every species of creatures has a right to from us. It is to be regretted that this generous maxim is not more attended to, in the affair of education, and pressed home upon tender minds in its full extent and latitude. I am far, indeed, from thinking that the early delight which children discover in tormenting flies, &c. is a mark of any innate cruelty of temper; because this turn may be accounted for upon other principles; and it is entertaining unworthy notions of the Deity to suppose he forms mankind with a propensity to the most detestable of all dispositions. But most certainly, by being unrestrained in sports of this kind, they may acquire by habit, what they never would have learned from nature, and grow up into a confirmed inattention to every kind of suffering but their own. Accordingly, the supreme court of judicature at Athens thought an instance of this sort not below its cognizance, and punished a boy for putting out the eyes of a poor bird that had unhappily fallen into his hands.

It might be of service, therefore, it should seem, in order to awaken, as early as possible, in children, an extensive sense of humanity, to give them a view of several sorts of insects as they may be magnified by the assistance of glasses, and to show them that the same evident marks of wisdom and goodness prevail in the formation of the minutest insect, as in that of the most enormous leviathan: that they are equally furnished with whatever is necessary, not only to the preservation, but the happiness of their beings, in that class of

existence to which Providence has assigned them : in a word, that the whole construction of their respective organs distinctly proclaims them the objects of the divine benevolence, and, therefore, that they justly ought to be so of ours. I am, &c.

XVII. TO THE SAME.

Feb. 1, 1738.

You see how much I trust to your good-nature and your judgment, whilst I am the only person, perhaps, among your friends, who have ventured to omit a congratulation in form. I am not, however, intentionally guilty ; for I really designed you a visit before now ; but hearing that your acquaintance flowed in upon you from all quarters, I thought it would be more agreeable to you, as well as to myself, if I waited till the inundation was abated. But if I have not joined in the general voice of congratulation, I have not, however, omitted the sincere, though silent wishes, which the warmest friendship can suggest to a heart entirely in your interests. Had I not long since forsaken the regions of poetry, I would tell you, in the language of that country, how often I have said, may

all heaven,

And happy constellations on that hour

Shed their selectest influence !—*Milton*.

But plain prose will do as well for plain truth ; and there is no occasion for any art to persuade you, that you have, upon every occurrence of your life, my best good wishes. I hope shortly to have an opportunity of making myself better known to

Aspasia. When I am so, I shall rejoice with her, on the choice she has made of a man, from whom I will undertake to promise her all the happiness which the state she has entered into can afford. Thus much I do not scruple to say of her husband to you ; the rest I had rather say to her. If upon any occasion you should mention me, let it be in the character which I most value myself upon, that of your much obliged and very affectionate friend.

XVIII. TO HORTENSIUS.

July 5, 1739.

I CAN by no means subscribe to the sentiments of your last letter, nor agree with you in thinking that the love of fame is a passion which either reason or religion condemns. I confess, indeed, there are some who have represented it as inconsistent with both ; and I remember, in particular, the excellent author of *The Religion of Nature delineated* has treated it as highly irrational and absurd. As the passage falls in so thoroughly with your own turn of thought, you will have no objection, I imagine, to my quoting it at large ; and I give it you, at the same time, as a very great authority on your side. “ In reality,” says that writer, “ the man is not known ever the more to posterity, because his name is transmitted to them : he doth not live because his name does. When it is said, Julius Cæsar subdued Gaul, conquered Pompey, &c. it is the same thing as to say, the conqueror of Pompey was Julius Cæsar, *i. e.* Cæsar and the conqueror of Pompey is the same thing ; Cæsar is as much known by one designation as by the other. The amount then is only this : that the conqueror of Pompey

conquered Pompey ; or somebody conquered Pompey ; or rather, since Pompey is as little known now as Cæsar, somebody conquered somebody. Such a poor business is this boasted immortality ! and such is the thing called glory among us ! To discerning men this fame is mere air, and what they despise, if not shun."

But surely, "'twere to consider too curiously," (as Horatio says to Hamlet,) "to consider thus." For, though fame with posterity should be, in the strict analysis of it, no other than what is here described, a mere uninteresting proposition, amounting to nothing more than that somebody acted meritoriously ; yet it would not necessarily follow, that true philosophy would banish the desire of it from the human breast. For this passion may be (as most certainly it is) wisely implanted in our species, notwithstanding the corresponding object should in reality be very different from what it appears in imagination. Do not many of our most refined, and even contemplative pleasures, owe their existence to our mistakes ? It is but extending (I will not say improving) some of our senses to a higher degree of acuteness than we now possess them, to make the fairest views of nature, or the noblest productions of art, appear horrid and deformed. To see things as they truly and in themselves are, would not always, perhaps, be of advantage to us in the intellectual world, any more than in the natural. But, after all, who shall certainly assure us, that the pleasure of virtuous fame dies with its possessor, and reaches not to a farther scene of existence ? There is nothing, it should seem, either absurd or unphilosophical in supposing

it possible, at least, that the praises of the good and the judicious, that sweetest music to an honest ear in this world, may be echoed back to the mansions of the next : that the poet's description of Fame may be literally true ; and though she walks upon earth, she may yet lift her head into heaven.

But can it be reasonable to extinguish a passion which nature has universally lighted up in the human breast, and which we constantly find to burn with most strength and brightness in the noblest and best-formed bosoms ? Accordingly, revelation is so far from endeavouring (as you suppose) to eradicate the seed which nature has thus deeply planted, that she rather seems, on the contrary, to cherish and forward its growth. To be exalted with honour, and to be had in everlasting remembrance, are in the number of those encouragements which the Jewish dispensation offered to the virtuous ; as the person from whom the sacred author of the Christian system received his birth, is herself represented as rejoicing that “ all generations should call her blessed.”

To be convinced of the great advantage of cherishing this high regard to posterity, this noble desire of an after-life in the breath of others, one need only look back upon the history of the ancient Greeks and Romans. What other principle was it, Hortensius, which produced that exalted strain of virtue in those days, that may well serve as a model to these ? Was it not the *consentiens laus bonorum*, the *incorrupta vox bene judicantium*, (as Tully calls it,) the concurrent approbation of the good, the uncorrupted applause of the wise, that animated their most generous pursuits ?

To confess the truth, I have been ever inclined to think it a very dangerous attempt, to endeavour to lessen the motives of right acting, or to raise any suspicion concerning their solidity. The tempers and dispositions of mankind are so extremely different, that it seems necessary they should be called into action by a variety of incitements. Thus, while some are willing to wed Virtue for her personal charms, others are engaged to take her for the sake of her expected dowry: and since her followers and admirers have so little to hope from her at present, it were pity, methinks, to reason them out of any imaginary advantage in reversion. Farewell. I am, &c.

XIX. TO CLEORA.

I THINK, Cleora, you are the truest female hermit I ever knew; at least, I do not remember to have met with any among your sex of the same order with yourself: for as to the religious on the other side of the water, I can by no means esteem them worthy of being ranked in your number. They are a sort of people who either have seen nothing of the world, or too much: and where is the merit of giving up what one is not acquainted with, or what one is weary of? But you are a far more illustrious recluse, who have entered into the world with innocency, and retired from it with good-humour. That sort of life, which makes so amiable a figure in the description of poets and philosophers, and which kings and heroes have professed to aspire after, Cleora actually enjoys: she lives her own, free from the follies and impertinences,

the hurry and disappointments of false pursuits of every kind. How much do I prefer one hour of such solitude to all the glittering, glaring, gaudy days of the ambitious! I shall not envy them their gold and their silver, their precious jewels, and their changes of raiment, while you permit me to join you and Alexander in your hermitage. I hope to do so on Sunday evening, and attend you to the siege of Tyre, or the deserts of Africa, or wherever else your hero shall lead you. But should I find you in more elevated company, and engaged with the rapturous * * * *, even then, I hope, you will not refuse to admit me of your party. If I have not yet a proper *gout* for the mystic writers, perhaps I am not quite incapable of acquiring one; and as I have every thing of the hermit in my composition except the enthusiasm, it is not impossible but I may catch that also, by the assistance of you and * * * *. I desire you would receive me as a probationer, at least, and as one who is willing, if he is worthy, to be initiated into your secret doctrines. I think I only want this taste, and a relish for the marvellous, to be wholly in your sentiments. Possibly I may be so happy as to attain both in good time: I fancy, at least, there is a close connexion between them, and I shall not despair of obtaining the one, if I can by any means arrive at the other. But which must I endeavour at first? shall I prepare for the mystic, by commencing with the romance, or would you advise me to begin with *Malebranche*, before I undertake *Clelia*? Suffer me, however, ere I enter the regions of fiction, to bear testimony to one constant truth, by assuring you that I am, &c.

XX. TO EUPHRONIUS.

Oct. 10, 1742.

I HAVE often mentioned to you the pleasure I received from Mr. Pope's translation of the Iliad: but my admiration of that inimitable performance has increased upon me, since you tempted me to compare the copy with the original. To say of this noble work, that it is the best which ever appeared of the kind, would be speaking in much lower terms than it deserves; the world, perhaps, scarce ever before saw a truly poetical translation; for, as Denham observes,

Such is our pride, our folly, or our fate,
That few, but those who cannot write, translate.

Mr. Pope seems, in most places, to have been inspired with the same sublime spirit that animates his original; as he often takes fire from a single hint in his author, and blazes out even with a stronger and brighter flame of poetry. Thus the character of Thersites, as it stands in the English Iliad, is heightened, I think, with more masterly strokes of satire than appear in the Greek; as many of those similies in Homer, which would appear, perhaps, to a modern eye too naked and unornamented, are painted by Pope in all the beautiful drapery of the most graceful metaphor. With what propriety of figure, for instance, has he raised the following comparison!

Εὐτ' ὄρεος κορυφῇσι Νότος κατεχευεν ὀμιχλὴν,
Ποιμέσιν οὐτὶ φίλῃν, κλεπτῇ δὲ τε νυκτὸς ἀμείνω,
Τόσσον τις τ' ἐπιλευσσει, ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ λααν ἰησὶν·
Ὡς ἀρὰ τῶν ὑπο ποσσὶ κονισσαλὸς ὠρνυτ' ἀελλῆς
Ερχομένων. IL. iii. 10.

Thus from his flaggy wings when Eurys sheds
 A night of vapours round the mountain-heads,
 Swift gliding mists the dusky fields invade;
 To thieves more grateful than the midnight shade :
 While scarce the swains their feeding flocks survey,
 Lost and confused amidst the thicken'd day;
 So wrapp'd in gathering dust, the Grecian train,
 A moving cloud, swept on and hid the plain.

When Mars, being wounded by Diomed, flies
 back to heaven, Homer compares him, in his pas-
 sage, to a dark cloud raised by summer heats, and
 driven by the wind.

Οἷη δ' ἐκ νεφελῶν ἐρεβεννὴ φαίνεται ἀήρ,
 Καυματος ἐξ ἀνεμοῖο δυσᾶτος ορνυμένοιο. IL. v. 864.

The inimitable translator improves this image,
 by throwing in some circumstances, which, though
 not in the original, are exactly in the spirit of
 Homer :

As vapours, blown by Auster's sultry breath,
 Pregnant with plagues, and shedding seeds of death,
 Beneath the rage of burning Sirius rise,
 Choke the parch'd earth, and blacken all the skies :
 In such a cloud the god, from combat driven,
 High o'er the dusty whirlwind scales the heaven.

There is a description in the eighth book, which
 Eustathius, it seems, esteemed the most beautiful
 night-piece that could be found in poetry. If I am
 not greatly mistaken, however, I can produce a
 finer : and I am persuaded even the warmest ad-
 mirer of Homer will allow the following lines are
 inferior to the corresponding ones in the trans-
 lation :

Ως δ' οτ' εν ουρανῳ αστρα φαεινην αμφι σεληνην
 Φαινετ' αριπρεπεα, οτε τ' επλετο νηνεμος αιθηρ,
 Εκ τ' εφανον πασαι σκοπιαι, και πρωονες ακροι,
 Και ναπαι ουρανοθεν δ' αρ' υπερραγη ασπετος αιθηρ,
 Παντα δε τ' ειδεται αστρα γεγηθε δε τε φρενα ποιμην.
 IL. viii. 555.

As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
 O'er heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light;
 When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
 And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene,
 Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
 And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole;
 O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
 And tip with silver every mountain's head;
 Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise,
 A flood of glory bursts from all the skies;
 The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
 Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light.

I fear the enthusiastic admirers of Homer would look upon me with much indignation, were they to hear me speak of any thing in modern language as equal to the strength and majesty of that great father of poetry. But the following passage having been quoted by a celebrated author of antiquity, as an instance of the true sublime, I will leave it to you to determine whether the translation has not at least as just a claim to that character as the original.

Ως δ' οτε χειμαρροι ποταμοι κατ' ορεσφι ρεοντες,
 Ες μισγαγκειαν συμβαλλετον οβριμον υδωρ,
 Κρουνων εκ μεγαλων κοιλης εντοσθε χαραδρης,
 Τωνδε τε τηλοσε δουπον εν ουρεσιν εκλυε ποιμην.
 Ως των μισγομενων γενετο ιαχη τε φοβος τε.

As torrents roll, increased by numerous rills,
 With rage impetuous down their echoing hills,

Rush to the vales, and, pour'd along the plain,
 Roar through a thousand channels to the main;
 The distant shepherd, trembling, hears the sound;
 So mix both hosts, and so their cries rebound.

There is no ancient author more likely to betray an injudicious interpreter into meannesses than Homer; as it requires the utmost skill and address to preserve that venerable air of simplicity which is one of the characteristical marks of that poet, without sinking the expression or the sentiment into contempt. Antiquity will furnish a very strong instance of the truth of this observation, in a single line which is preserved to us from a translation of the Iliad, by one Labeo, a favourite poet, it seems, of Nero: it is quoted by an old scholiast upon Persius, and happens to be a version of the following passage in the fourth book:

Ωμρον βεβρωθεις Πριάμον Πριάμοιο τε παιδας.

which Nero's admirable poet rendered literally thus:

Crudum manduces Priamum Priamique pisinnos.

I need not indeed have gone so far back for my instance: a Labeo of our own nation would have supplied me with one much nearer at hand. Ogilby or Hobbes (I forget which) has translated this very verse in the same ridiculous manner:

And eat up Priam and his children all.

But, among many other passages of this sort, I observed one in the same book, which raised my curiosity to examine in what manner Mr. Pope had

conducted it.—Juno, in a general council of the gods, thus accosts Jupiter :

Αἰνοτάτε Κρονίδη,
Πῶς ἐθέλεις ἄλιον θείναι πόνον, ἢ δ' ἀτελέστον
Ἰδρωθ', οὐκ ἰδρωσα μογῶ; καμῆτην δὲ μοι ἵπποι
Λαὸν ἀγείρουσιν, Πριάμῳ κακὰ, τοιοῦτο τέ παῖσιν—

which is as much as if she had said, in plain English, “Why surely, Jupiter, you won't be so cruel as to render ineffectual all my expense of labour and sweat. Have I not tired both my horses, in order to raise forces to ruin Priam and his family?” It requires the most delicate touches imaginable to raise such a sentiment as this into any tolerable degree of dignity. But a skilful artist knows how to embellish the most ordinary subject; and what would be low and spiritless from a less masterly pencil, becomes pleasing and graceful when worked up by Mr. Pope's :

Shall then, O tyrant of the ethereal plain,
My schemes, my labours, and my hopes be vain?
Have I for this shook Ilion with alarms,
Assembled nations, set two worlds in arms?
To spread the war I flew from shore to shore:
The immortal coursers scarce the labour bore.

But, to show you that I am not so enthusiastic an admirer of this glorious performance, as to be blind to its imperfections, I will venture to point out a passage or two (amongst others which might be mentioned) wherein Mr. Pope's usual judgment seems to have failed him.

When Iris is sent to inform Helen that Paris and Menelaus were going to decide the fate of both nations by single combat, and were actually upon the

point of engaging, Homer describes her as hastily throwing a veil over her face, and flying to the Scæan gate, from whence she might have a full view of the field of battle.

Αυτικά δ' αργεννησι καλυψαμενη οθονησιν,
 Ωρματ' εκ θαλαμοιο, τερεν κατα δακρυ χεουσα.
 Ουκ οιη' αμα τηγε και αμφιπολοι δυ' εποντο, &c.
 Αιψα δ' επειθ' ικανον, οθι Σκαιαι πυλαι ησαν.

IL. iii. 141.

Nothing could possibly be more interesting to Helen, than the circumstances in which she is here represented: it was necessary therefore to exhibit her, as Homer we see has, with much eagerness and impetuosity in her motion. But what can be more calm and quiet than the attitude wherein the Helen of Mr. Pope appears?

O'er her fair face a snowy veil she threw,
 And softly sighing, from the loom withdrew:
 Her handmaids—————wait
 Her silent footsteps to the Scæan gate.

Those expressions of speed and impetuosity, which occur so often in the original lines, αυτικα—ωρματο—αιψα ικανον, would have been sufficient, one should have imagined, to have guarded a translator from falling into an impropriety of this kind.

This brings to my mind another instance of the same nature, where our English poet, by not attending to the particular expression of his author, has given us a picture of a very different kind than what Homer intended. In the first Iliad the reader is introduced into a council of the Grecian chiefs, where very warm debates arise between Agamemnon and Achilles. As nothing was likely to prove more

fatal to the Grecians than a dissension between those two princes, the venerable old Nestor is represented as greatly alarmed at the consequences of this quarrel, and rising up to moderate between them with a vivacity much beyond his years. This circumstance Homer has happily intimated by a single word :

τοισι δὲ Νέστωρ
ΑΝΟΡΟΥΣΕ.

Upon which one of the commentators very justly observes, *ut in re magnâ et periculosâ, non placide assurgentem facit, sed prorumpentem senem quoque.* A circumstance which Horace seems to have had particularly in his view in the epistle to Lollius :

Nestor componere lites
Inter Peliden *festinat* et inter Atriden.—*Ep. i. 2.*

This beauty Mr. Pope has utterly overlooked, and substituted an idea very different from that which the verb *ανορουω* suggests : he renders it,

Slow from his seat arose the Pylian sage.

But a more unfortunate word could scarcely have been joined with *arose*, as it destroys the whole spirit of the piece, and is just the reverse of what both the occasion and the original required.

I doubt, Euphronius, you are growing weary : will you have patience, however, whilst I mention one observation more ? and I will interrupt you no longer.

When Menelaus and Paris enter the lists, Pope says,

Amidst the dreadful vale the chiefs advance,
All pale with rage, and shake the threatening lance.

In the original it is,

Ες μεσσον Τρωων και Αχαιων εστιχωντο,
 Δεινον δερκομενοι. Il. iii. 341.

But does not the expression “all pale with rage,” call up a very contrary idea to δεινον δερκομενοι? The former seems to suggest to one’s imagination the ridiculous passion of a couple of female scolds; whereas the latter conveys the terrifying image of two indignant heroes, animated with calm and deliberate valour. Farewell. I am, &c.

XXI. TO CLEORA.

March 3, 1739.

AFTER having read your last letter, I can no longer doubt of the truth of those salutary effects which are said to have been produced by the application of certain written words. I have myself experienced the possibility of the thing; and a few strokes of your pen have abated a pain, which of all others is the most uneasy, and the most difficult to be relieved; even the pain, my Cleora, of the mind. To sympathize with my sufferings, as Cleora kindly assures me she does, is to assuage them; and half the uneasiness of her absence is removed, when she tells me that she regrets mine.

Since I thus assuredly find that you can work miracles, I will believe likewise that you have the gift of prophecy; and I can no longer despair that the time will come, when we shall again meet, since you have absolutely pronounced that it will. I have ventured, therefore, (as you will see by my last letter) already to name the day. In the mean time, I amuse myself with doing every thing that looks like a preparation for my journey; *e gia apro*

le braccia per stringervi affettuosamente al mio senno.

The truth is, you are every instant in my thoughts, and each occurrence that arises suggests you to my remembrance. If I see a clear sky, I wish it may extend to you; and if I observe a cloudy one, I am uneasy lest my Cleora should be exposed to it. I never read an interesting story, or a pertinent remark, that I do not long to communicate it to you, and learn to double my relish by hearing your judicious observations. I cannot take a turn in my garden, but every walk calls you into my mind. Ah, Cleora! I never view those scenes of our former conversations without a sigh. Judge then how often I sigh, when every object that surrounds me brings you fresh to my imagination. You remember the attitude in which the faithful Penelope is drawn in Pope's *Odyssey*, when she goes to fetch the bow of Ulysses for the suitors:

Across her knees she laid the well-known bow,
And pensive sat, and tears began to flow.

I find myself in numberless such tender reveries; and if I were ever so much disposed to banish you from my thoughts, it would be impossible I should do so, in a place where every thing that presents itself to me, reminds me that you were once here. I must not expect (I ought not, indeed, for the sake of your repose, to wish) to be thus frequently and thus fondly the subject of your meditations: but may I not hope that you employ a few moments at least of every day, in thinking of him whose whole attention is fixed upon you?

I have sent you the *History of the Conquest of*

Mexico, in English, which, as it is translated by so good a hand, will be equally pleasing and less troublesome, than reading it in the original. I long to be of this party in your expedition to the new world, as I lately was in your conquests of Italy. How happily could I sit by Cleora's side, and pursue the Spaniards in their triumphs, as I formerly did the Romans: or make a transition from a nation of heroes to a republic of ants! Glorious days indeed! when we passed whole mornings either with dictators or butterflies; and sometimes sent out a colony of Romans, and sometimes of emmets! Adieu. I am, &c.

XXII. TO PALEMON.

Dec. 18, 1740.

THOUGH I am not convinced by your arguments, I am charmed by your eloquence, and admire the preacher at the same time that I condemn the doctrine. But there is no sort of persons whose opinions one is more inclined to wish right, than those who are ingeniously in the wrong; who have the art to add grace to error, and can dignify mistakes.

Forgive me, then, Palemon, if I am more than commonly solicitous that you should review the sentiments you advanced (I will not say supported) with so much elegance in your last letter, and that I press you to reconsider your notions again and again. Can I fail, indeed, to wish that you may find reason to renounce an opinion, which may possibly, one day or other, deprive me of a friend, and my country of a patriot, while Providence, perhaps, would yet have spared him to both? Can I fail to

regret, that I should hold one of the most valuable enjoyments of my life upon a tenure more than ordinarily precarious; and that, besides those numberless accidents by which chance may snatch you from the world, a gloomy sky, or a cross event, may determine Palemon to put an end to a life, which all who have been a witness to must for ever admire?

But, “does the Supreme Being,” you ask, “dispense his bounties upon conditions different from all other benefactors, and will he force a gift upon me which is no longer acceptable?”

Let me demand, in return, whether a creature, so confined in its perceptions as man, may not mistake his true interest, and reject, from a partial regard, what would be well worth accepting upon a more comprehensive view? May not even a mortal benefactor better understand the value of that present he offers, than the person to whom it is tendered? And shall the supreme Author of all beneficence be esteemed less wise in distinguishing the worth of those grants he confers? I agree with you, indeed, that we were called into existence in order to receive happiness: but I can by no means infer from thence, that we are at liberty to resign our being whenever it becomes a burden. On the contrary, those premises seem to lead to a conclusion directly opposite; and if the gracious Author of my life created me with an intent to make me happy, does it not necessarily follow, that I shall most certainly obtain that privilege, if I do not justly forfeit it by my own misconduct? Numberless ends may be answered, in the schemes of Providence, by turning aside or interrupting that

stream of bounty, which our limited reason can in no sort discover. How presumptuous, then, must it be, to throw back a grant upon the hands of the great Governor of the universe, merely because we do not immediately feel or understand its full advantages!

That it is the intention of the Deity we should remain in this state of being, till his summons calls us away, seems as evident as that we at first entered into it by his command: for we can no more continue, than we could begin to exist, without the concurrence of the same supreme interposition. While, therefore, the animal powers do not cease to perform those functions to which they were directed by their great Author, it may justly, I think, be concluded that it is his design they should not.

Still, however, you urge, "That by putting a period to your own existence here, you only alter the modification of matter; and how," you ask, "is the order of Providence disturbed by changing the combination of a parcel of atoms from one figure to another?"

But surely, Palemon, there is a fallacy in this reasoning: suicide is something more than changing the component parts of the animal machine. It is striking out a spiritual substance from that rank of beings wherein the wise Author of nature has placed it, and forcibly breaking in upon some other order of existence. And as it is impossible for the limited powers of reason to penetrate the designs of Providence, it can never be proved that this is not disturbing the schemes of nature. We possibly may be, and indeed most probably are, connected with

some higher rank of creatures : now philosophy will never be able to determine, that those connexions may not be disconcerted by prematurely quitting our present mansion.

One of the strongest passions implanted in human nature is the fear of death. It seems, indeed, to be placed by Providence as a sort of guard to retain mankind within their appointed station. Why, else, should it so universally, and almost invariably, operate? It is observable that no such affection appears in any species of beings below us. They have no temptation, or no ability, to desert the post assigned to them, and therefore it should seem, they have no checks of this kind to keep them within their prescribed limits. This general horror, then, in mankind, at the apprehension of their dissolution, carries with it, I think, a very strong presumptive argument in favour of the opinion I am endeavouring to maintain : for if it were not given to us for the purpose I have supposed, what other can it serve? Can it be imagined that the benevolent Author of nature would have so deeply wove it into our constitution, only to interrupt our present enjoyments?

I cannot, I confess, discover how the practice of suicide can be justified upon any principle, except upon that of downright atheism. If we suppose a good Providence to govern the world, the consequence is undeniable, that we must entirely rely upon it. If we imagine an evil one to prevail, what chance is there of finding that happiness in another scene, which we have in vain sought for in this? The same malevolent omnipotence can as easily

pursue us in the next remove, as persecute us in this our first station.

Upon the whole, Palemon, prudence strongly forbids so hazardous an experiment as that of being our own executioners. We know the worst that can happen in supporting life under all its most wretched circumstances: and if we should be mistaken in thinking it our duty to endure a load, which in truth we may securely lay down, it is an error extremely limited in its consequences. They cannot extend beyond this present existence, and possibly may end much earlier: whereas no mortal can, with the least degree of assurance, pronounce what may not be the effect of acting agreeably to the contrary opinion. I am, &c.

XXIII. TO CLYTANDER.

Sept. 28, 1733.

I AM, by no means, in the sentiments of that Grecian of your acquaintance, who, as often as he was pressed to marry, replied either that it was too soon or too late: and I think my favourite author, the honest Montagne, a little too severe, when he observes, upon this story, *qu'il faut refuser l'opportunité à toute action importune*: for

——higher of the genial bed by far,
And with mysterious reverence I deem.—*Milton.*

However, I am not adventurous enough to join with those friends you mention, who are soliciting you, it seems, to look out for an engagement of this kind. It is an union which requires so much delicacy in the cementing; it is a commerce where so

many nice circumstances must concur to render it successful, that I would not venture to pronounce of any two persons, that they are qualified for each other.

I do not know a woman in the world who seems more formed to render a man of sense and generosity happy in this state, than Amasia: yet I should scarcely have courage to recommend even Amasia to my friend. You have seen her, I dare say, a thousand times; but I am persuaded she never attracted your particular observation, for she is in the number of those who are ever overlooked in a crowd. As often as I converse with her, she puts me in mind of the golden age: there is an innocence and simplicity in all her words and actions, that equals any thing the poets have described of those pure and artless times. Indeed the greatest part of her life has been spent much in the same way as the early inhabitants of the world, in that blameless period of it, used, we are told, to dispose of theirs; under the shade and shelter of her own venerable oaks, and in those rural amusements which are sure to produce a confirmed habit both of health and cheerfulness. Amasia never said, or attempted to say, a sprightly thing in all her life; but she has done ten thousand generous ones; and if she is not the most conspicuous figure at an assembly, she never envied or maligned those who are. Her heart is all tenderness and benevolence; no success ever attended any of her acquaintance, which did not fill her bosom with the most disinterested complacency; as no misfortune ever reached her knowledge, that she did not relieve or participate by her generosity. If ever she should

fall into the hands of a man she loves, (and I am persuaded she would esteem it the worst kind of prostitution to resign herself into any other) her whole life would be one continued series of kindness and compliance. The humble opinion she has of her own uncommon merit, would make her so much the more sensible of her husband's; and those little submissions on his side, which a woman of more pride and spirit would consider only as a claim of right, would be esteemed by Amasia as so many additional motives to her love and gratitude.

But if I dwell any longer upon this amiable picture, I may be in danger, perhaps, of resembling that ancient artist, who grew enamoured of the production of his own pencil: for my security, therefore, as well as to put an end to your trouble, it will be best, I believe, to stop here. I am, &c.

XXIV. TO ORONTES.

I WAS apprehensive my last had given you but too much occasion of recollecting the remark of one of your admired ancients, that "the art of eloquence is taught by man, but it is the gods alone that inspire the wisdom of silence." That wisdom, however, you are not willing I should yet practise; and you must needs, it seems, have my farther sentiments upon the subject of oratory. Be it then as my friend requires: but let him remember, it is a hazardous thing to put some men upon talking on a favourite topic.

One of the most pleasing exercises of the imagina-

tion, is that wherein she is employed in comparing distinct ideas, and discovering their various resemblances. There is no single perception of the mind that is not capable of an infinite number of considerations in reference to other objects; and it is in the novelty and variety of these unexpected connexions, that the richness of a writer's genius is chiefly displayed. A vigorous and lively fancy does not tamely confine itself to the idea which lies before it, but looks beyond the immediate object of its contemplation, and observes how it stands in conformity with numberless others. It is the prerogative of the human mind thus to bring its images together, and compare the several circumstances of similitude that attend them. By this means, eloquence exercises a kind of magic power; she can raise innumerable beauties from the most barren subjects, and give the grace of novelty to the most common. The imagination is thus kept awake by the most agreeable motion, and entertained with a thousand different views both of art and nature, which still terminate upon the principal object. For this reason I prefer the metaphor to the simile, as a far more pleasing method of illustration. In the former, the action of the mind is less languid, as it is employed, at one and the same instant, in comparing the resemblance with the idea it attends; whereas, in the latter, its operations are more slow, being obliged to stand still, as it were, in order to contemplate first the principal object, and then its corresponding image.

Of all the flowers, however, that embellish the regions of eloquence, there is none of a more tender and delicate nature, as there is nothing wherein a

fine writer is more distinguished from one of an ordinary class, than in the conduct and application of this figure. He is at liberty, indeed, to range through the whole compass of creation, and collect his images from every object that surrounds him. But though he may be thus amply furnished with materials, great judgment is required in choosing them : for to render a metaphor perfect, it must not only be apt, but pleasing ; it must entertain, as well as enlighten. Mr. Dryden, therefore, can hardly escape the imputation of a very unpardonable breach of delicacy, when, in the dedication of his Juvenal, he observes to the earl of Dorset, that “ some bad poems carry their owner’s marks about them—some brand or other on this buttock, or that ear, that it is notorious who are the owners of the cattle.” The poet Manilius seems to have raised an image of the same injudicious kind, in that compliment which he pays to Homer in the following verses :

cujusque ex ore profusus
Omnis posteritas latices in carmine duxit.

I could never read these lines without calling to mind those grotesque heads, which are fixed to the roof of the old building of King’s college in Cambridge ; which the ingenious architect has represented in the act of vomiting out the rain, that falls through certain pipes most judiciously stuck in their mouths for that purpose. Mr. Addison recommends a method of trying the propriety of a metaphor, by drawing it out in visible representation. Accordingly, I think this curious conceit of the builder might be employed to the advantage of

the youth in that university, and serve for as proper an illustration of the absurdity of the poet's image, as that ancient picture which Ælian mentions, where Homer was figured with a stream running from his mouth, and a group of poets lapping it up at a distance.

But, besides a certain decorum which is requisite to constitute a perfect metaphor, a writer of true taste and genius will always single out the most obvious images, and place them in the most unobserved points of resemblance. Accordingly, all allusions which point to the more abstruse branches of the arts or sciences, and with which none can be supposed to be acquainted but those who have gone far into the deeper studies, should be carefully avoided, not only as pedantic, but impertinent; as they pervert the single use of this figure, and add neither grace nor force to the idea they would elucidate. The most pleasing metaphors, therefore, are those which are derived from the more frequent occurrences of art or nature, or the civil transactions and customs of mankind. Thus, how expressive, yet, at the same time, how familiar, is that image which Otway has put into the mouth of Metellus, in his play of Caius Marius, where he calls Sulpicius

That mad wild bull whom Marius lets loose
On each occasion, when he'd make Rome feel him,
To toss our laws and liberties in the air!

But I never met with a more agreeable, or a more significant allusion, than one in Quintus Curtius, which is borrowed from the most ordinary object in common life. That author represents Craterus as dissuading Alexander from continuing

his Indian expedition, against enemies too contemptible, he tells him, for the glory of his arms; and concludes his speech with the following beautiful thought : *Cito gloria obsolescit in sordidis hostibus; nec quidquam indignius est quam consumi eam ubi non potest ostendi.* Now I am got into Latin quotations, I cannot forbear mentioning a most beautiful passage, which I lately had the pleasure of reading, and which I will venture to produce as equal to any thing of the same kind, either in ancient or modern composition. I met with it in the speech of a young orator, to whom I have the happiness to be related, and who will one day, I persuade myself, prove as great an honour to his country, as he is at present to that learned society of which he is a member. He is speaking of the writings of a celebrated prelate, who received his education in that famous seminary to which he belongs, and illustrates the peculiar elegance which distinguishes all that author's performances, by the following just and pleasing assemblage of diction and imagery : *In quodcumque opus se parabat (et per omnia sane versatile illius se duxit ingenium) nescio quâ luce sibi soli propriâ, id illuminavit; haud dissimili ei aureo Titiani radio, qui per totam tabulam gliscens, eam vere suam denuntiat.* As there is nothing more entertaining to the imagination, than the productions of the fine arts; there is no kind of similitudes or metaphors which are, in general, more striking than those which allude to their properties and effects. It is with great judgment, therefore, that the ingenious author of the dialogue concerning the decline of eloquence among the Romans, recommends to his orator a general

acquaintance with the whole circle of the polite arts. A knowledge of this sort furnishes an author with illustrations of the most agreeable kind, and sets a gloss upon his compositions which enlivens them with singular grace and spirit.

Were I to point out the beauty and efficacy of metaphorical language, by particular instances, I should rather draw my examples from the moderns than the ancients; the latter being scarcely, I think, so exact and delicate in this article of composition, as the former. The great improvements, indeed, in natural knowledge, which have been made in these later ages, have opened a vein of metaphor entirely unknown to the ancients, and enriched the fancy of modern wits with a new stock of the most pleasing ideas: a circumstance, which must give them a very considerable advantage over the Greeks and Romans. I am sure, at least, of all the writings with which I have been conversant, the works of Mr. Addison will afford the most abundant supply of this kind, in all its variety and perfection. Truth and beauty of imagery is, indeed, his characteristical distinction, and the principal point of eminence which raises his style above that of every author in any language that has fallen within my notice. He is every where highly figurative; yet, at the same time, he is the most easy and perspicuous writer I have ever perused. The reason is, his images are always taken from the most natural and familiar appearances; as they are chosen with the utmost delicacy and judgment. Suffer me only to mention one out of a thousand I could name, as it appears to me the finest and most expressive that ever language conveyed. It is in

one of his inimitable papers upon *Paradise Lost*, where he is taking notice of those changes in nature, which the author of that truly divine poem describes as immediately succeeding the fall. Among other prodigies, Milton represents the sun in an eclipse ; and at the same time, a bright cloud in the western region of the heavens descending with a band of angels. Mr. Addison, in order to show his author's art and judgment in the conduct and disposition of this sublime scenery, observes, "the whole theatre of nature is darkened, that this glorious machine may appear in all its lustre and magnificence." I know not, Orontes, whether you will agree in sentiment with me ; but, I must confess, I am at a loss which to admire most upon this occasion, the poet or the critic.

There is a double beauty in images of this kind, when they are not only metaphors, but allusions. I was much pleased with an instance of this uncommon species, in a little poem, entitled *The Spleen*. The author of that piece, (who has thrown together more original thoughts than I ever read in the same compass of lines) speaking of the advantages of exercise in dissipating those gloomy vapours, which are so apt to hang upon some minds, employs the following image :

Throw but a stone, the giant dies.

You will observe, Orontes, that the metaphor here is conceived with great propriety of thought, if we consider it only in its primary view ; but when we see it pointing still farther, and hinting at the story of David and Goliath, it receives a very considerable improvement from this double application.

It must be owned, some of the greatest authors, both ancient and modern, have made many remarkable slips in the management of this figure, and have sometimes expressed themselves with as much impropriety as an honest sailor of my acquaintance, a captain of a privateer, who wrote an account to his owners of an engagement, "in which he had the good fortune," he told them, "of having only one of his hands shot through the nose." The great caution, therefore, should be, never to join any idea to a figurative expression, which would not be applicable to it in a literal sense. Thus Cicero, in his treatise *De Claris Oratoribus*, speaking of the family of the Scipios, is guilty of an impropriety of this kind: *O generosam stirpem* (says he) *et tamquam in unam arborem plura genera, sic in istam domum multorum insitam atque illuminatam sapientiam*. Mr. Addison, likewise, has fallen into an error of the same sort, where he observes, "There is not a single view of human nature, which is not sufficient to extinguish the seeds of pride." In this passage he evidently unites images together which have no connexion with each other. When a seed has lost its power of vegetation, I might, in a metaphorical sense, say it is extinguished: but when, in the same sense, I call that disposition of the heart which produces pride, the seed of that passion, I cannot, without introducing a confusion of ideas, apply any word to seed but what corresponds with its real properties or circumstances.

Another mistake in the use of this figure, is, when different images are crowded too close upon each other; or, (to express myself after Quintilian) when a sentence sets out with storms and tempests,

and ends with fire and flames. A judicious reader will observe an impropriety of this kind, in one of the late essays of the inimitable author last quoted, where he tells us, "that women were formed to temper mankind, not to set an edge upon their minds, and blow up in them those passions which are too apt to rise of their own accord." Thus a celebrated orator, speaking of that little blackening spirit in mankind, which is fond of discovering spots in the brightest characters, remarks, that when persons of this cast of temper have mentioned any virtue of their neighbour, "it is well, if, to balance the matter, they do not clap some fault into the opposite scale, that so the enemy may not go off with flying colours." Dr. Swift, also, whose style is the most pure and simple of any of our classic writers, and who does not seem, in general, very fond of the figurative manner, is not always free from censure in his management of the metaphorical language. In his essay on the "Dissensions of Athens and Rome," speaking of the populace, he takes notice, that, "though in their corrupt notions of divine worship, they are apt to multiply their gods; yet their earthly devotion is seldom paid to above one idol at a time, whose oar they pull with less murmuring and much more skill, than when they shared the lading, or even hold the helm." The most injudicious writer could not possibly have fallen into a more absurd inconsistency of metaphor than this eminent wit has inadvertently been betrayed into, in this passage: for what connexion is there between worshipping and rowing, and who ever heard before of pulling the oar of an idol?

As there are certain metaphors which are common to all language, there are others of so delicate a nature, as not to bear transplanting from one nation into another. There is no part, therefore, of the business of a translator more difficult to manage, than this figure, as it requires great judgment to distinguish when it may, and may not, be naturalized with propriety and elegance. The want of this necessary discernment has led the common race of translators into great absurdities, and is one of the principal reasons that performances of this kind are generally so insipid. What strange work, for instance, would an injudicious interpreter make with the following metaphor in Homer?

Νυν γὰρ δὴ πάντεσσιν ἐπὶ ξυροῦ ἰσταται ἀκμῆς.

IL. x. 173.

But Mr. Pope, by artfully dropping the particular image, yet retaining the general idea, has happily preserved the spirit of his author; and, at the same time, humoured the different state of his own countrymen.

Each single Greek, in this conclusive strife,
Stands on the sharpest edge of death or life.

And now, Orontes, do you not think it high time to be dismissed from this fairy land? Permit me, however, just to add, that this figure, which casts so much light and beauty upon works of genius, ought to be entirely banished from the severer compositions of philosophy. It is the business of the latter to separate resemblances, not to find them, and to deliver her discoveries in the plainest and most unornamented expressions. Much

dispute, and, perhaps, many errors, might have been avoided, if metaphor had been thus confined within its proper limits, and never wandered from the regions of eloquence and poetry. I am, &c.

XXV. TO PHILOTES.

Aug. 5, 1744.

Do not you begin to think that I ill deserve the prescription you sent me, since I have scarce had the manners even to thank you for it? It must be confessed, I have neglected to "honour my physician with the honour due unto him:" that is, I have omitted not only what I ought to have performed by good-breeding, but what I am expressly enjoined by my Bible. I am not, however, entirely without excuse; a silly one, I own; nevertheless, it is the truth. I have lately been a good deal out of spirits; but at length the fit is over. Amongst the number of those things which are wanting to secure me from a return of it, I must always reckon the company of my friend. I have, indeed, frequent occasion for you, not in the way of your profession, but in a better; in the way of friendship. There is a healing quality in that intercourse, which a certain author has, with infinite propriety, termed the "medicine of life." It is a medicine, which, unluckily, lies almost wholly out of my reach; fortune having separated me from those few friends whom I pretend or desire to claim. General acquaintances, you know, I am not much inclined to cultivate; so that I am at present as much secluded from society as if I were a "sojourner in a strange land." Though retirement is my dear delight, yet, upon

some occasions, I think I have too much of it; and I agree with Balzac, *que la solitude est certainement une belle chose; mais il y a plaisir d'avoir quelqu'un qui sache repondre; à qui on puisse dire de tems en tems, que la solitude est une belle chose.* But I must not forget, that, as I sometimes want company, you may as often wish to be alone; and that I may, perhaps, be at this instant breaking in upon one of those hours which you desire to enjoy without interruption. I will only detain you, therefore, whilst I add that I am, &c.

XXVI. TO PHIDIPPUS.

May 1, 1745.

IF that friend of yours, whom you are desirous to add to the number of mine, were endowed with no other quality than the last you mentioned in the catalogue of his virtues, I should esteem his acquaintance as one of my most valuable privileges. When you assured me, therefore, of the generosity of his disposition, I wanted no additional motive to embrace your proposal of joining you and him at * *. To say truth, I consider a generous mind as the noblest work of the creation, and am persuaded, wherever it resides, no real merit can be wanting. It is, perhaps, the most singular of all the moral endowments. I am sure, at least, it is often imputed where it cannot justly be claimed. The meanest self-love, under some refined disguise, frequently passes upon common observers for this godlike principle; and I have known many a popular action attributed to this motive, when it flowed from no higher a source than the suggestions of concealed vanity. Good-nature, as it has many fea-

tures in common with this virtue, is usually mistaken for it: the former, however, is but the effect, possibly, of a happy disposition of the animal structure, or, as Dryden somewhere calls it, of a certain "milkeness of blood:" whereas the latter is seated in the mind, and can never subsist where good sense and enlarged sentiments have no existence. It is entirely founded, indeed, upon justness of thought; which, perhaps, is the reason this virtue is so little the characteristic of mankind in general. A man, whose mind is warped by the selfish passions, or contracted by the narrow prejudices of sects or parties, if he does not want honesty, must undoubtedly want understanding. The same clouds that darken his intellectual views, obstruct his moral ones; and his generosity is extremely circumscribed, because his reason is exceedingly limited.

It is the distinguishing pre-eminence of the Christian system, that it cherishes this elevated principle in one of its noblest exertions. Forgiveness of injuries, I confess, indeed, has been inculcated by several of the heathen moralists; but it never entered into the established ordinances of any religion, till it had the sanction of the great Author of ours. I have often, however, wondered that the ancients, who raised so many virtues and affections of the mind into divinities, should never have given a place in their temples to Generosity; unless, perhaps, they included it under the notion of *Fides* or *Honos*. But, surely, she might reasonably have claimed a separate altar, and superior rites. A principle of honour may restrain a man from counteracting the social ties, who yet has nothing of that active flame of generosity, which is too

powerful to be confined within the humbler boundaries of mere negative duties. True generosity rises above the ordinary rules of social conduct, and flows with much too full a stream to be comprehended within the precise marks of formal precepts. It is a vigorous principle in the soul, which opens and expands all her virtues far beyond those which are only the forced and unnatural productions of timid obedience. The man who is influenced singly by motives of the latter kind, aims no higher than at certain authoritative standards, without ever attempting to reach those glorious elevations which constitute the only true heroism of the social character. Religion, without this sovereign principle, degenerates into slavish fear, and wisdom into a specious cunning: learning is but the avarice of the mind, and wit its more pleasing kind of madness. In a word, generosity sanctifies every passion, and adds grace to every acquisition of the soul; and if it does not necessarily include, at least it reflects a lustre upon the whole circle of moral and intellectual qualities.

But I am running into a general panegyric upon generosity, when I only meant to acknowledge the particular instance you have given me of yours, in being desirous of communicating to me a treasure, which I know much better how to value than how to deserve. Be assured, therefore, though Euphronius had none of those polite accomplishments you enumerate, yet, after what you have informed me concerning his heart, I should esteem his friendship of more worth, than all the learning of ancient Greece, and all the *virtù* of modern Italy. I am, &c.

XXVII. TO SAPPHO.*

March 10, 1731.

WHILE yet no amorous youths around thee bow,
Nor flattering verse conveys the faithless vow ;
To graver notes will Sappho's soul attend,
And, ere she hears the lover, hear the friend ?

Let maids less bless'd employ their meaner arts
To reign prou'd tyrants o'er unnumber'd hearts ;
May Sappho learn (for nobler triumphs born)
Those little conquests of her sex to scorn.
To form the bosom to each generous deed ;
To plant thy mind with every useful seed ;
Be these thy arts ; nor spare the grateful toil,
Where nature's hand has bless'd the happy soil.
So shalt thou know, with pleasing skill, to blend
The lovely mistress and instructive friend :
So shalt thou know, when unrelenting Time
Shall spoil those charms yet opening to their prime,
To ease the loss of beauty's transient flower,
While reason keeps what rapture gave before.
And oh ! whilst wit, fair dawning, spreads its ray,
Serenely rising to a glorious day,
To hail the growing lustre oft be mine,
Thou early favourite of the sacred Nine !

And shall the Muse with blameless boast pretend,
In youth's gay bloom that Sappho call'd me friend ;
That urged by me she shunn'd the dangerous way,
Where heedless maids in endless error stray ;
That scorning soon her sex's idler art,
Fair praise inspired, and virtue warm'd her heart ;

* A young lady of thirteen years of age.

That fond to reach the distant paths of fame,
I taught her infant genius where to aim ?
Thus when the feather'd choir first tempt the sky,
And, all unskill'd, their feeble pinions try,
The experienced sire prescribes the adventurous
height,
Guides the young wing, and pleased attends the
flight.

XXVIII. TO PHIDIPPUS.

YES, Phidippus, I entirely agree with you; the ancients most certainly had much loftier notions of friendship than seem to be generally entertained at present. But may they not justly be considered, on this subject, as downright enthusiasts? Whilst, indeed, they talk of friendship as a virtue, or place it in a rank little inferior, I can admire the generous warmth of their sentiments; but when they go so far as to make it a serious question, whether justice herself ought not, in some particular cases, to yield to this their supreme affection of the heart; there, I confess, they leave me far behind.

If we had not a treatise extant upon the subject, we should scarce believe this fact, upon the credit of those authors who have delivered it down to us: but Cicero himself has ventured to take the affirmative side of this debate, in his celebrated dialogue inscribed *Lælius*. He followed, it seems, in this notion, the sentiments of the Grecian Theophrastus, who publicly maintained the same astonishing theory.

It must be confessed, however, these admirers of the false sublime in friendship talk upon this

subject with so much caution, and in such general terms, that one is inclined to think they themselves a little suspected the validity of those very principles they would inculcate. We find, at least, a remarkable instance to that purpose, in a circumstance related of Chilo, one of those famous sages who are distinguished by the pompous title of the wise men of Greece.

That celebrated philosopher, being upon his death-bed, addressed himself, we are informed, to his friends who stood round him, to the following effect: "I cannot, through the course of a long life, look back with uneasiness upon any single instance of my conduct, unless, perhaps, on that which I am going to mention, wherein, I confess, I am still doubtful whether I acted as I ought, or not. I was once appointed judge, in conjunction with two others, when my particular friend was arraigned before us. Were the laws to have taken their free course, he must inevitably have been condemned to die. After much debate, therefore, with myself, I resolved upon this expedient: I gave my own vote according to my conscience, but, at the same time, employed all my eloquence to prevail with my associates to absolve the criminal. Now I cannot but reflect upon this act with concern, as fearing there was something of perfidy, in persuading others to go counter to what I myself esteemed right."

It does not, certainly, require any great depth of casuistry to pronounce upon a case of this nature. And yet had Tully, that great master of reason, been Chilo's confessor, upon this occasion, it is very plain he would have given him absolution, to the

just scandal of the most ignorant curate that ever lulled a country village.

What I have here observed, will suggest, if I mistake not, a very clear answer to the question you propose: "Whence it should happen, that we meet with instances of friendship among the Greeks and Romans, far superior to any thing of the same kind which modern times have produced?" For while the greatest geniuses among them employed their talents in exalting this noble affection, and it was encouraged even by the laws themselves, what effects might not one expect to arise from the concurrence of such powerful causes? The several examples of this kind which you have pointed out, are undoubtedly highly animating and singular: to which give me leave to add one instance, no less remarkable, though, I think, not so commonly observed.

Eudamidas, the Corinthian, (as the story is related in Lucian's *Toxaris*,) though in low circumstances himself, was happy in the friendship of two very wealthy persons, Charixenus and Aretheus. Eudamidas, finding himself drawing near his end, made his will in the following terms: "I leave my mother to Aretheus, to be maintained and protected by him in her old age. I bequeathe to Charixenus the care of my daughter; desiring that he would see her disposed of in marriage, and portion her, at the same time, with as ample a fortune as his circumstances shall admit: and, in case of the death of either of these my two friends, I substitute the survivor in his place."

This will was looked upon, by some, as we may well imagine, to be extremely ridiculous: however,

the legatees received information of it with very different sentiments, accepting of their respective legacies with great satisfaction. It happened that Charixenus died a few days after his friend, the testator: the survivorship, therefore, taking place in favour of Aretheus, he, accordingly, not only took upon himself the care of his friend's mother, but also made an equal distribution of his estate between this child of Eudamidas and an only daughter of his own, solemnizing both their marriages on the same day.

I do not recollect that any of the moderns have raised their notions of friendship to these extravagant heights, excepting only a very singular French author, who talks in a more romantic strain upon this subject than even the ancients themselves. Could you, Phidippus, believe a man in earnest, who should assert, that the secret one has sworn never to reveal, may, without perjury, be discovered to one's friend? Yet the honest Montagne has ventured gravely to advance this extraordinary doctrine, in clear and positive terms. But I never knew a sensible man in my life, that was not an enthusiast upon some favourite point; as, indeed, there is none where it is more excusable than in the article of friendship. It is that which affords the most pleasing sunshine of our days; if, therefore, we see it now and then break out with a more than reasonable warmth and lustre, who is there that will not be inclined to pardon an excess, which can only flow from the most generous principles? Adieu. I am, &c.

XXIX. TO THE SAME.

July 3, 1746.

WHEN I mentioned grace as essential in constituting a fine writer, I rather hoped to have found my sentiments reflected back with a clearer light by yours, than imagined you would have called upon me to explain in form, what I only threw out by accident. To confess the truth, I know not whether, after all that can be said to illustrate this uncommon quality, it must not at last be resolved into the poet's *nequeo monstrare, et sentio tantum*. In cases of this kind, where language does not supply us with proper words to express the notions of one's mind, we can only convey our sentiments in figurative terms: a defect which necessarily introduces some obscurity.

I will not, therefore, undertake to mark out, with any sort of precision, that idea which I would express by the word grace: and, perhaps, it can no more be clearly described than justly defined. To give you, however, a general intimation of what I mean, when I apply that term to compositions of genius, I would resemble it to that easy air, which so remarkably distinguishes certain persons of a genteel and liberal cast. It consists, not only in the particular beauty of single parts, but arises from the general symmetry and construction of the whole. An author may be just in his sentiments, lively in his figures, and clear in his expression; yet may have no claim to be admitted into the rank of finished writers. Those several members must be so agreeably united as mutually to reflect beauty upon each other: their arrangement must be

so happily disposed as not to admit of the least transposition, without manifest prejudice to the entire piece. The thoughts, the metaphors, the allusions, and the diction, should appear easy and natural, and seem to arise like so many spontaneous productions, rather than as the effects of art or labour.

Whatever, therefore, is forced or affected in the sentiments, whatever is pompous or pedantic in the expression, is the very reverse of grace. Her mien is neither that of a prude nor a coquet: she is regular without formality, and sprightly without being fantastical. Grace, in short, is to good writing what a proper light is to a fine picture; it not only shows all the figures in their several proportions and relations, but shows them in the most advantageous manner.

As gentility (to resume my former illustration) appears in the minutest action, and improves the most inconsiderable gesture; so grace is discovered in the placing even of a single word, or the turn of a mere expletive. Neither is this inexpressible quality confined to one species of composition only, but extends to all the various kinds; to the humble pastoral as well as to the lofty epic; from the slightest letter to the most solemn discourse.

I know not whether sir William Temple may not be considered as the first of our prose authors, who introduced a graceful manner into our language. At least, that quality does not seem to have appeared early, or spread far amongst us. But where-soever we may look for its origin, it is certainly to be found in its highest perfection in the essays of a gentleman whose writings will be distinguished so

long as politeness and good sense have any admirers. That becoming air which Tully esteemed the criterion of fine composition, and which every reader, he says, imagines so easy to be imitated, yet will find so difficult to attain, is the prevailing characteristic of all that excellent author's most elegant performances. In a word, one may justly apply to him what Plato, in his allegorical language, says of Aristophanes; that the Graces having searched all the world round for a temple wherein they might for ever dwell, settled at last in the breast of Mr. Addison. Adieu. I am, &c.

XXX. TO CLYTANDER.

CAN it then be true, Clytander, that, after all the fine things which have been said concerning the love of our country, it owes its rise to the principles you mention, and was originally propagated among mankind in order to cheat them into the service of the community? And is it thus, at last, that the most generous of the human passions, instead of bearing the sacred signature of nature, can produce no higher marks of its legitimacy than the suspicious impress of art? The question is worth, at least, a few thoughts; and I will just run over the principal objections in your letter, without drawing them up, however, in a regular form.

That the true happiness of the individual cannot arise from the single exercise of the mere selfish principles, is evident, I think, above all reasonable contradiction. If a man would thoroughly enjoy his own being, he must, of necessity, look beyond

it; his private satisfactions always increasing in the same proportion with which he promotes those of others. Thus self-interest, if rightly directed, flows through the nearer charities of relations, friends, and dependents, till it rises and dilates itself into general benevolence. But if every addition which we make to the welfare of others be really an advancement of our own; the love of our country must necessarily, upon a principle of self-interest, be a passion founded in the strictest reason; because it is a disposition pregnant with the greatest possible good which the limited powers of man are capable of producing. Benevolence, therefore, points to our country, as to her only adequate mark: whatever falls short of that glorious end, is too small for her full gratification; and all beyond is too immense for her grasp.

Thus our country appears to have a claim to our affection, as it has a correspondent passion in the human breast: a passion, not raised by the artifices of policy, or propagated by the infection of enthusiasm, but necessarily resulting from the original constitution of our species, and conducive to the highest private advantage of each individual. When Curtius, therefore, or the two Decii, sacrificed their lives, in order to rescue their community from the calamities with which it was threatened, they were by no means impelled (as you seemed to represent them) by a political phrensy, but acted on the most solid and rational principles. The method they pursued, for that purpose, was dictated, I confess, by the most absurd and groundless superstition: yet, while the impression of that national belief remained strong upon their minds, and they were

thoroughly persuaded that falling, in the manner we are assured they did, was the only effectual means of preserving their country from ruin; they took the most rational measures of consulting their private happiness, by thus consenting to become the public victims. Could it even be admitted (what, with any degree of probability, never, indeed, can be admitted) that these glorious heroes considered fame as the vainest of shadows, and had no hopes of an after-life in any other scene of existence; still, however, their conduct might be justified as perfectly wise. For surely, to a mind that was not wholly immersed in the lowest dregs of the most contracted selfishness; that had not totally extinguished every generous and social affection; the thoughts of having preferred a mere joyless existence (for such it must have been) to the supposed preservation of numbers of one's fellow-creatures, must have been far more painful than a thousand deaths.

I cannot, however, but agree with you, that this affection was productive of infinite mischief to mankind, as it broke out among the Romans, in the impious spirit of their unjust conquests. But it should be remembered, at the same time, that it is the usual artifice of ambition, to mask herself in the semblance of patriotism. And it can be no just objection to the noblest of the social passions, that it is capable of being inflamed beyond its natural heat, and turned, by the arts of policy, to promote those destructive purposes, which it was originally implanted to prevent.

This zeal for our country may, indeed, become irrational, not only when it thus pushes us on to

act counter to the natural rights of any other community; but, likewise, when it impels us to take the measures of violence in opposition to the general sense of our own. For may not public happiness be estimated by the same standard as that of private? and as every man's own opinion must determine his particular satisfaction, shall not the general opinion be considered as decisive in the question concerning general interest? Far am I, however, from insinuating, that the true welfare of mankind, in their collective capacities, depends singly upon a prevailing fancy, any more than it does in their separate; undoubtedly, in both instances, they may equally embrace a false interest. But whenever this is the case, I should hardly imagine that the love of our country, on the one hand, or of our neighbour on the other, would justify any methods of bringing them to a wiser choice, than those of calm and rational persuasion.

I cannot at present recollect which of the ancient authors it is that mentions the Cappadocians to have been so enamoured of subjection to a despotic power, as to refuse the enjoyment of their liberties, though generously tendered to them by the Romans. Scarcely, I suppose, can there be an instance produced of a more remarkable depravity of national taste, and of a more false calculation of public welfare: yet, even in this instance, it should seem the highest injustice to have attempted, by force, and at the expense, perhaps, of half the lives in the state, the introduction of a more improved system of government.

In this notion I am not singular, but have the authority of Plato himself on my side, who held it

as a maxim of undoubted truth, in politics, that the prevailing sentiments of a state, how much soever mistaken, ought by no means to be opposed by the measures of violence: a maxim, which if certain pretended or misguided patriots had happily embraced, much effusion of civil blood had been lately spared to our nation. Adieu. I am, &c.

XXXI. TO PALAMEDES.

Nov. 4, 1740.

The dawn is overcast, the morning lours,
And heavily with clouds brings on the day.

How then can I better disappoint the gloomy effects of a loursing sky, than by calling my thoughts off from the dull scene before me, and placing them upon an object which I always consider with pleasure? Much, certainly, are we indebted to that happy faculty, by which, with a sort of magic power, we can bring before one's mind whatever has been the subject of its most agreeable contemplation. In vain, therefore, would that lovely dame, who has so often been the topic of our conversations, pretend to enjoy you to herself: in spite of your favourite philosophy, or even of a more powerful divinity; in spite of Fortune herself, I can place you in my view, though half a century of miles lies between us. But am I for ever to be indebted to imagination only for your presence? and will you not sometimes let me owe that pleasure to yourself? Surely you might spare me a few weeks before the summer ends, without any inconvenience to that noble plan upon which I know you are so intent. As for my own studies,

they go on but slowly: I am, like a traveller without a guide in an unknown country, obliged to inquire the way at every turning; and, consequently, cannot advance with all the expedition I could wish. Adieu. I am, &c.

XXXII. TO THE SAME.

Aug. 10, 1745.

FORGIVE me, Palamedes, if I mistrust an art, which the greatest of philosophers has called the art of deceiving, and by which the first of orators could persuade the people that he had conquered at the athletic games, though they saw him fall at his adversary's feet. The voice of eloquence should ever, indeed, be heard with caution; and she, whose boast it has formerly been, to make little things appear considerable, may diminish objects, perhaps, as well as enlarge them, and lessen even the charms of repose. But I have too long experienced the joys of retirement, to quit her arms for a more lively mistress; and I can look upon ambition, though adorned in all the ornaments of your oratory, with the cool indifference of the most confirmed Stoic. To confess the whole truth, I am too proud to endure a repulse, and too humble to hope for success; qualities little favourable, I imagine, to the pretensions of him who would claim the glittering prizes which animate those that run the race of ambition. Let those honours, then, you mention, be inscribed on the tombs of others; be it rather told on mine, that I lived and died

Unplaced, unpension'd, no man's heir or slave.

And is not this a privilege as valuable as any of

those which you have painted to my view, in all the warmest colours of your enlivening eloquence? Bruyere, at least, has just now assured me, that, "to pay one's court to no man, nor expect any to pay court to you, is the most agreeable of all situations; it is the true golden age," says he, "and the most natural state of man."

Believe me, however, I am not in the mistake of those whom you justly condemn, as imagining that wisdom is the companion only of retirement, and that virtue enters not the more open and conspicuous walks of life: but I will confess, at the same time, that though it is to Tully I give my applause, it is Atticus that has my affection.

"Life," says a celebrated ancient, "may be compared to the Olympic games: some enter into those assemblies for glory, and others for gain; while there is a third party (and those by no means the most contemptible) who choose to be merely spectators." I need not tell you, Palamedes, how early it was my inclination to be numbered with the last; and as nature has not formed me with powers, am I not obliged to her for having divested me of every inclination for bearing a part in the ambitious contentions of the world? Providence, indeed, seems to have designed some tempers for the obscure scenes of life; as there are some plants which flourish best in the shade. But the lowest shrub has its use, you are sensible, as well as the loftiest oak; and, perhaps, your friend may find some method of convincing you, that even the humblest talents are not given in vain. Farewell. I am, &c.

XXXIII. TO PALEMON.

May 28, 1748.

Is it possible you can thus descend from the highest concerns to the lowest, and, after deliberating upon the affairs of Europe, have the humility to inquire into mine? But the greatest statesmen, it seems, have their trifling as well as their serious hours; and I have read of a Roman consul that amused himself with gathering cockle-shells, and of a Spartan monarch who was found riding upon a hobby-horse. Or, shall I rather say, that friendship gilds every object upon which she shines? As it is the singular character of Palemon to preserve that generous flame in all its strength and lustre, amidst that ambitious atmosphere which is generally esteemed so unfavourable to every brighter affection.

It is upon one or other of those principles alone, that you can be willing to suspend your own more important engagements, by attending to an account of mine. They have lately, indeed, been more diversified than usual, and I have passed these three months in a continual succession of new scenes. The most agreeable, as well as the farthest part of my progress, was to the seat of Hortensius; and I am persuaded you will not think my travels have been in vain, since they afford me an opportunity of informing you, that our friend is in possession of all that happiness which I am sure you wish him. It is probable, however, you have not yet heard that he owes the chief part of it to female merit; for his marriage was concluded even before those

friends, who are most frequently with him, had the least suspicion of his intentions. But though he had some reasons for concealing his designs, he has none for being ashamed of them now they are executed. I say not this from any hasty approbation, but as having long known and esteemed the lady whom he has chosen: and, as there is a pleasure in bringing two persons of merit to the knowledge of each other, will you allow me, in the remainder of this letter, to introduce her to your acquaintance?

Hortensia is of a good stature, and perfectly well proportioned; but one cannot so properly say her air is genteel, as that it is pleasing: for there is a certain unaffected carelessness in her dress and mien, that wins by degrees, rather than strikes at first sight. If you were to look no farther than the upper part of her face, you would think her handsome; were you only to examine the lower, you would immediately pronounce the reverse; yet there is something in her eyes, which, without any pretence to be called fine, gives such an agreeable liveliness to her whole countenance, that you scarce observe, or soon forget, all her features are not regular. Her conversation is rather cheerful than gay, and more instructive than sprightly.—But the principal and most distinguished faculties of her mind are her memory and her judgment, both which she possesses in a far higher degree than one usually finds even in persons of our sex. She has read most of the capital authors both in French and English; but her chief and favourite companions of that kind have lain among the historical and dramatic writers. There is hardly a remarkable event,

in ancient or modern story, of which she cannot give a very clear and judicious account; as she is equally well versed in all the principal characters and incidents of the most approved stage compositions. The mathematics is not wholly a stranger to her; and though she did not think proper to pursue her inquiries of that kind to any great length, yet the very uncommon facility with which she entered into the reasonings of that science, plainly discovered she was capable of attaining a thorough knowledge of all its most abstruse branches.—Her taste, in performances of polite literature, is always just; and she is an excellent critic, without knowing any thing of the artificial rules of that science. Her observations, therefore, upon subjects of that sort, are so much the more to be relied upon, as they are the pure and unbiassed dictates of nature and good sense. Accordingly, Hortensius, in the several pieces which you know he has published, constantly had recourse to her judgment; and I have often heard him, upon those occasions, apply, with singular pleasure, and with equal truth, what the tender Propertius says of his favourite Cynthia:

*Me juvat in gremio doctæ legisse puellæ,
Auribus et puris scripta probâsse mea:
Hæc ubi contigerint, populi confusa valeto
Fabula! nam, dominâ judice, tutus ero.*

But her uncommon strength of understanding has preserved her from that fatal rock of all female knowledge, the impertinent ostentation of it; and she thinks a reserve in this article an essential part of that modesty which is the ornament of her

sex. I have heard her observe, that it is not in the acquired endowments of the female mind, as in the beauties of her person, where it may be sufficient praise, perhaps, to follow the example of the virgin described by Tasso, who,

Non copre sue bellezze, e non l'espone.

On the contrary, she esteems it a point of decency to throw a veil over the superior charms of her understanding; and if ever she draws it aside, you plainly perceive it is rather to gratify her good-nature than her vanity; less in compliance with her own inclinations, than with those of her company.

Her refined sense and extensive knowledge have not, however, raised her above the more necessary acquisitions of female science; they have only taught her to fill that part of her character with higher grace and dignity. She enters into all the domestic duties of her station with the most consummate skill and prudence. Her economical deportment is calm and steady; and she presides over her family, like the Intelligence of some planetary orb, conducting it in all its proper directions without violence or disturbed efforts.

These qualities, however considerable they might appear in a less shining character, are but under parts in Hortensia's; for it is from the virtues of her heart that she derives her most irresistible claim to esteem and approbation. A constant flow of uniform and unaffected cheerfulness gladdens her own breast, and enlivens that of every creature around her. Her behaviour, under the injuries she

has received (for injuries even the blameless Hortensia has received) was with all the calm fortitude of the most heroic patience; as she firmly relied, that Providence would either put an end to her misfortunes, or support her under them. And with that elevated hope, she seemed to feel less for herself, than for the unjust and inhuman author of her sufferings; generously lamenting to see one, so nearly related to her, stand condemned by that severest and most significant of sentences, the united reproaches of the world and of his conscience.

Thus, Palemon, I have given you a faithful copy of an excellent original; but whether you will join with me in thinking my pencil has been true to its subject, must be left to some future opportunity to determine. I am, &c.

XXXIV. TO HORTENSIUS.

Dec. 10, 1730.

I HAVE read over the treatise you recommended to me with attention and concern. I was sorry to find an author, who seems so well qualified to serve the cause of truth, employing his talents in favour of what appears to me a most dangerous error. I have often wondered, indeed, at the policy of certain philosophers of this cast, who endeavour to advance religion by depreciating human nature. Methinks it would be more for the interest of virtue, to represent her congenial (as congenial she surely is) with our make, and agreeable to our untainted constitution of soul: to prove that every deviation from moral rectitude is an opposition to our native bias, and contrary to those

characters of dignity which the Creator has universally impressed upon the mind. This, at least, was the principle which many of the ancient philosophers laboured to inculcate; as there is not, perhaps, any single topic in ethics that might be urged with more truth, or greater efficacy.

It is upon this generous and exalted notion of our species, that one of the noblest precepts of the excellent Pythagoras is founded: Παντων δε μαλιστα (says that philosopher) αισχυνεο σαυτον. The first and leading disposition to engage us on the side of virtue, was, in that sage's estimation, to preserve, above all things, a constant reverence to our own mind, and to dread nothing so much as to offend against its native dignity. The ingenious Mr. Norris, I remember, recommends this precept as one of the best, perhaps, that was ever given to the world. May one not justly, then, be surprised to find it so seldom enforced in our modern systems of morality? To confess the truth, I am strongly inclined to suspect, that much of that general contempt of every manly principle, which so remarkably distinguishes the present times, may fairly be attributed to the humour of discarding this animating notion of our kind. It has been the fashion to paint human nature in the harshest and most unpleasing colours. Yet there is not, surely, any argument more likely to induce a man to act unworthily, than to persuade him that he has nothing of innate worthiness in his genuine disposition; than to reason him out of every elevated notion of his own grandeur of soul; and to destroy, in short, every motive that might justly inspire him with a

principle of self-reverence, that surest internal guard Heaven seems to have assigned to the human virtues. Farewell. I am, &c.

XXXV. TO CLEORA.

THOUGH it was not possible for me to celebrate with you, as usual, that happy anniversary which we have so many reasons to commemorate, yet I could not suffer so joyful a festival to pass by me without a thousand tender reflections. I took pleasure in tracing back that stream to its rise, which has coloured all my succeeding days with happiness; as my Cleora, perhaps, was at that very instant running over in her own mind, those many moments of calm satisfaction which she has derived from the same source.

My heart was so entirely possessed with the sentiments which this occasion suggested, that I found myself raised into a sort of poetical enthusiasm; and I could not forbear expressing, in verse, what I have often said in prose, of the dear author of my most valuable enjoyments. As I imagined Teraminta would, by this time, be with you, I had a view to her harpsichord in the composition, and I desire you would let her know, I hope she will show me, at my return, to what advantage the most ordinary numbers will appear, when judiciously accompanied with a fine voice and instrument.

I must not forget to tell you, it was in your favourite grove, which we have so often traversed together, that I indulged myself in these pleasing reveries; as it was not, you are to suppose, with-

out having first invoked the Genius of the place, and called upon the Muses in due form, that I broke out in the following rhapsody :

ODE FOR MUSIC.

AIR I.

Thrice has the circling earth, swift pacing, run,
And thrice again around the sun,
Since first the white-robed priest, with sacred band,
Sweet union ! join'd us hand in hand.

CHORUS.

All Heaven, and every friendly Power,
Approved the vow and bless'd the hour.

RECITATIVE.

What though in silence sacred Hymen trod,
Nor lyre proclaim'd, nor garland crown'd the god ;
What though nor feast nor revel dance was there ;
(Vain pomp of joy the happy well may spare !)
Yet Love unfeign'd, and conscious Honour, led
The spotless virgin to the bridal bed ;
Rich, though despoil'd of all her little store.
For who shall seize fair virtue's better dower ?

AIR II.

Bless'd with sense, with temper bless'd,
Wisdom o'er thy lips presides ;
Virtue guards thy generous breast,
Kindness all thy actions guides.

AIR III.

Every home-felt bliss is mine,
Every matron grace is thine ;
Chaste deportment, artless mien,
Converse sweet, and heart serene.

Sinks my soul with gloomy pain?
See, she smiles!—'tis joy again!
Swells a passion in my breast?
Hark, she speaks! and all is rest.

Oft as clouds my paths o'erspread,
(Doubtful where my steps should tread)
She, with judgment's steady ray,
Marks and smoothes the better way.

CHORUS.

Chief amongst ten thousand she;
Worthy, sacred Hymen! thee.

While such are the sentiments which I entertain of my Cleora, can I find myself obliged to be thus distant from her, without the highest regret? The truth, believe me, is, though both the company and the scene wherein I am engaged are extremely agreeable; yet I find a vacancy in my happiness, which none but you can fill up. Surely those who have recommended these little separations as necessary to revive the languor of the married state, have ill understood its most refined gratifications: there is no satiety in the mutual exchange of tender offices.

There seems to have been a time, when a happiness of this kind was considered as the highest glory, as well as the supreme blessing of human life. I remember, when I was in Italy, to have seen several conjugal inscriptions upon the sepulchral monuments of ancient Rome, which, instead of running out into a pompous panegyric upon the virtues of the deceased, mentioned singly, as the most significant of encomiums, how many years the parties had lived together in full and uninter-

rupted harmony.—The Romans, indeed, in this, as in many other instances, afford the most remarkable examples; and it is an observation of one of their writers, that, notwithstanding divorces might very easily be obtained among them, their republic had subsisted many centuries, before there was a single instance of that privilege ever having been exerted. Thus, my Cleora, you see, however unfashionable I may appear in the present generation, I might have been kept in countenance in a former; and by those too, who had as much true gallantry and good sense as one usually meets with in this. But affections which are founded in truth and nature stand not in need of any precedent to support them; and I esteem it my honour, no less than my happiness, that I am, &c.

XXXVI. TO CLYTANDER.

DID you imagine I was really in earnest, when I talked of quitting * * * , and withdrawing from those gilded prospects which ambition had once so strongly set in my view? But my vows, you see, are not in the number of those which are made to be broken; for the retreat I had long meditated, is now, at last, happily executed. To say truth, my friend, the longer I lived in the high scenes of action, the more I was convinced that nature had not formed me for bearing a part in them; and though I was once so unexperienced in the ways of the world, as to believe I had talents, as I was sure I had inclination to serve my country, yet every day's conversation contributed to wean me, by degrees, from that flattering delusion.

How, indeed, could a man hope to render himself acceptable to the various parties which divide our nation, who professes it as his principle that there is no striking wholly into the measures of any, without renouncing either one's sense or one's integrity? and yet, as the world is at present constituted, it is scarcely possible, I fear, to do any good in one's generation, (in public life I mean) without listing under some or other of those various banners which distinguish the several corps in these our political warfares. To those, therefore, who may have curiosity enough to enter into my concerns, and ask a reason for my quitting the town, I answer, in the words of the historian, *Civitatis morum tædet pigetque*. But I am wandering from the purpose of my letter, which was not so much to justify my retreat, as to incline you to follow me into it: to follow me, I mean, as a visitor only; for I love my country too well to call you off from those great services you are capable of doing her.

I have pitched my tent upon a spot which I am persuaded will not displease you. My villa (if you will allow me to call by that fine name, what, in truth, is no better than a neat farm-house,) is situated upon a gentle rise, which commands a short, though agreeable view, of about three miles in circumference. 'This is bounded on the north by a ridge of hills, which afford me at once both a secure shelter and a beautiful prospect; for they are as well cultivated as the most fertile valleys. In the front of my house, which stands south-east, I have a view of the river, that runs at the distance of somewhat less than a quarter of a mile, at the end of my grounds, and, after making several windings

and turnings, seems to lose itself at the foot of those hills I just now mentioned. As for my garden, I am obliged to nature for its chief beauties ; having no other (except a small spot which I have allotted for the purposes of my table) but what the fields and meadows afford. These, however, I have embellished with some care, having intermixed among the hedges all the several sorts of flowering shrubs.

But I must not forget to mention what I look upon to be the principal ornament of the place ; as, indeed, I do not recollect to have seen any thing of the kind in our English plantations. I have covered a small spot with different sorts of evergreens, many of which are of a species not very usual in our country. This little plantation I have branched out into various labyrinth-walks, which are all terminated by a small temple in the centre. I have a double advantage from this artificial wood ; for it not only affords me a very shady retreat in summer, but, as it is situated opposite to my library, supplies me in winter with a perspective of the most agreeable verdure imaginable.

What heightens my relish of this retirement, is the company of my Cleora ; as, indeed, many of the best improvements I have made in it are owing to hints which I have received from her exquisite taste and judgment.—She will rejoice to receive you as her guest here, and has given it me in charge to remind you that you have promised to be so. As the business of parliament is now drawing to a conclusion, I may urge this to you without any imputation upon my patriotism ; though, at the same time, I must add, I make a very considerable sacri-

fice of private interest, whenever I resign you for the sake of the public. Adieu. I am, &c.

XXXVII. TO HORTENSIVS.

ARE you aware, Hortensius, how far I may mislead you, when you are willing to resign yourself to my guidance through the regions of criticism? Remember, however, that I take the lead in these paths, not in confidence of my own superior knowledge of them, but in compliance with a request, which I never yet knew how to refuse. In short, Hortensius, I give you my sentiments, because it is my sentiments you require; but I give them, at the same time, rather as doubts than decisions.

After having thus acknowledged my insufficiency for the office you have assigned me, I will venture to confess, that the poet who has gained over your approbation, has been far less successful with mine. I have ever thought, with a very celebrated modern writer, that

Le vers le mieux rempli, la plus noble pensée,
Ne peut plaire à l'esprit quand l'oreille est blessée.

Boileau.

Thus, though I admit there is both wit in the raillery, and strength in the sentiments, of your friend's moral epistle, it by no means falls in with those notions I have formed to myself concerning the essential requisites in compositions of this kind. He seems, indeed, to have widely deviated from the model he professes to have had in view, and is no more like Horace, than Hyperion to a satyr. His

deficiency in point of versification, not to mention his want of elegance in the general manner of his poem, is sufficient to destroy the pretended resemblance. Nothing, in truth, can be more absurd, than to write in poetical measure, and yet neglect harmony; as, of all the kinds of false style, that which is neither prose nor verse, but I know not what inartificial combination of powerless words bordered with rhyme, is far, surely, the most insufferable.

But you are of opinion, I perceive, (and it is an opinion in which you are not singular) that a negligence of this kind may be justified by the authority of the Roman satirist: yet, surely, those who entertain that notion, have not thoroughly attended either to the precepts or the practice of Horace. He has attributed, I confess, his satirical composition to the inspiration of a certain Muse, whom he distinguishes by the title of the *Musa pedestris*, and it is this expression which seems to have misled the generality of his imitators. But though he will not allow her to fly, he by no means intends she should creep: on the contrary, it may be said of the Muse of Horace, as of the Eve of Milton, that

Grace is in all her steps.

That this was the idea which Horace himself had of her, is evident, not only from the general air which prevails in his satires and epistles, but from several express declarations, which he lets fall in his progress through them. Even when he speaks of her in his greatest fits of modesty, and describes her as exhibited in his moral writings, he particularly in-

sists upon the ease and harmony of her motions. Though he humbly disclaims, indeed, all pretensions to the higher poetry, the *acer spiritus et vis*, as he calls it; he represents his style as being governed by the *tempora certa modosque*, as flowing with a certain regular and agreeable cadence. Accordingly we find him particularly condemning his predecessor, Lucilius, for the dissonance of his numbers; and he professes to have made the experiment, whether the same kind of moral subject might not be treated in more soft and easy measures:

Quid vetat et nosmet Lucilî scripta legentes
Quærere, num illius, num rerum dura negârit
Versiculos natura magis factos, et euntes
Mollius?

The truth is, a tuneful cadence is the single prerogative of poetry which he pretends to claim to his writings of this kind: and so far is he from thinking it unessential, that he acknowledges it as the only separation which distinguishes them from prose. If that were once to be broken down, and the musical order of his words destroyed, there would not, he tells us, be the least appearance of poetry remaining:

Non

Invenias etiam disjecti membra poetæ.

However, when he delivers himself in this humble strain, he is not, you will observe, sketching out a plan of this species of poetry in general, but speaking merely of his own performances in particular. His demands rise much higher, when he informs us what he expects of those who would succeed in

compositions of this moral kind. He then not only requires flowing numbers, but an expression concise and unencumbered; wit, exerted with good breeding, and managed with reserve; as, upon some occasions, the sentiments may be enforced with all the strength of eloquence and poetry; and, though, in some parts, the piece may appear with a more serious and solemn cast of colouring, yet, upon the whole, he tells us, it must be lively and *riant*. This I take to be his meaning in the following passage:

Est brevitæ opus, ut currat sententia, neu se
Impediat verbis lassas onerantibus aures;
Et sermone opus est, modo tristi, sæpe jocosæ,
Defendente vicem modo rhetoris, atque poetæ;
Interdum urbani, parcentis viribus, atque
Extenuantis eas consulto.

Such, then, was the notion which Horace had of this kind of writing. And if there is any propriety in these his rules, if they are founded on the truth of taste and art; I fear the performance in question, with numberless others of the same stamp, (which have not, however, wanted admirers) must inevitably stand condemned. The truth of it is, most of the pieces which are usually produced upon this plan, rather give one an image of Lucilius, than of Horace: the authors of them seem to mistake the awkward negligence of the favourite of Scipio, for the easy air of the friend of Mæcenas.

You will still tell me, perhaps, that the example of Horace himself is an unanswerable objection to the notion I have embraced; as there are numberless lines in his satires and epistles, where the ver-

sification is evidently neglected. But are you sure, Hortensius, that those lines which sound so unharmonious to a modern ear, had the same effect upon a Roman one? For myself, at least, I am much inclined to believe the contrary; and it seems highly incredible, that he who had ventured to censure Lucilius for the uncouthness of his numbers, should himself be notoriously guilty of the very fault against which he so strongly exclaims. Most certain it is, that the delicacy of the ancients, with respect to numbers, was far superior to any thing that modern taste can pretend to; and that they discovered differences, which are to us absolutely imperceptible. To mention only one remarkable instance:—A very ancient writer has observed upon the following verse in Virgil,

Arma virumque cano, Trojæ qui primus ab oris—

that if, instead of *primus*, we were to pronounce it *primis*, (*is* being long, and *us* short) the entire harmony of the line would be destroyed. But whose ear is now so exquisitely sensible, as to perceive the distinction between those two quantities? Some refinement of this kind might probably give music to those lines in Horace, which now seem so untuneable.

In subjects of this nature, it is not possible, perhaps, to express one's ideas in any very precise and determinate manner. I will only, therefore, in general, observe, with respect to the requisite style of these performances, that it consists in a natural ease of expression, an elegant familiarity of phrase, which, though formed of the most usual terms of language, has yet a grace and energy, no less striking

than that of a more elevated diction. There is a certain lively colouring peculiar to compositions in this way, which, without being so bright and glowing as is necessary for the higher poetry, is, nevertheless, equally removed from whatever appears harsh and dry. But particular instances will, perhaps, better illustrate my meaning than any thing I can farther say to explain it. There is scarce a line in the moral epistles of Mr. Pope, which might not be produced for this purpose. I choose, however, to lay before you the following verses, not as preferring them to many others which might be quoted from that inimitable satirist; but as they afford me an opportunity of comparing them with a version of the same original lines, of which they are an imitation; and, by that means, of showing you, at one view, what I conceive is, and is not, in the true manner of Horace:

Peace is my dear delight—not Fleury's more;
But touch me, and no minister so sore.
Whoe'er offends, at some unlucky time,
Slides into verse, and hitches in a rhyme;
Sacred to ridicule his whole life long,
And the sad burthen of some merry song.

I will refer you to your own memory for the Latin passage, from whence Mr. Pope has taken the general hint of these verses; and content myself with adding a translation of the lines from Horace by another hand:

Behold me, blameless bard, how fond of peace!
But he who hurts me, (nay, I will be heard)
Had better take a lion by the beard;
His eyes shall weep the folly of his tongue,
By laughing crowds in rueful ballad sung.

There is a strength and spirit in the former of these passages, and a flatness and languor in the latter, which cannot fail of being discovered by every reader of the least delicacy of discernment; and yet the words which compose them both are equally sounding and significant. The rules then, which I just now mentioned from Horace, will point out the real cause of the different effects which these two passages produce in our minds; as the passages themselves will serve to confirm the truth and justice of the rules. In the lines from Mr. Pope, one of the principal beauties will be found to consist in the shortness of the expression; whereas, the sentiments in the other are too much encumbered with words. Thus, for instance,

Peace is my dear delight,

is pleasing because it is concise; as,

Behold me, blameless bard, how fond of peace!

is, in comparison of the former, the *verba lassas onerantia aures*. Another distinguishing perfection in the imitator of Horace, is that spirit of gaiety which he has diffused through these lines, not to mention those happy, though familiar, images of *sliding* into verse, and *hitching* in a rhyme; which can never be sufficiently admired. But the translator, on the contrary, has cast too serious an air over his numbers, and appears with an emotion and earnestness that disappoint the force of his satire:

Nay, I will be heard,

has the mien of a man in a passion; and

His eyes shall weep the folly of his tongue;

though a good line in itself, is much too solemn and tragical for the undisturbed pleasantry of Horace.

But I need not enter more minutely into an examination of those passages. The general hints I have thrown out in this letter will suffice to show you wherein I imagine the true manner of Horace consists. And after all, perhaps, it can no more be explained, than acquired, by rules of art. It is what true genius can only execute, and just taste alone discover. I am, &c.

XXXVIII. TO THE SAME.

Nov. 7, 1730.

YOUR admired poet, I remember, somewhere lays it down as a maxim, that

The proper study of mankind is man.

There cannot, indeed, be a more useful, nor, one should imagine, a more easy science: so many lessons of this kind are every moment forcing themselves upon our observation, that it should seem scarce possible not to be well acquainted with the various turns and dispositions of the human heart. And yet there are so few who are really adepts in this article, that to say of a man, he knows the world, is generally esteemed a compliment of the most significant kind.

The reason, perhaps, of the general ignorance which prevails in this sort of knowledge, may arise from our judging too much by universal principles; whereas there is a wonderful disparity in mankind, and numberless characters exist which can-

not properly be reduced to any regular and fixed standard. Monsieur Paschal observes, that the greater sagacity any man possesses, the more originals he will discern among his species: as it is the remark of sir William Temple, that no nation under the sun abounds with so many as our own. Plutarch, if I remember right, is of opinion, that there is a wider difference between the individuals of our own kind, than what is observable between creatures of a separate order: while Montagne (who seems to have known human nature perfectly well) supposes the distance to be still more remote, and asserts that the distinction is much greater between man and man, than between man and beast.

The comic writers have not, I think, taken all the advantage they might of this infinite diversity of humour in the human race. A judicious observer of the world might single out abundant materials for ridicule, without having recourse to those worn-out characters which are for ever returning upon the stage. If I were acquainted with any genius in this class of writers, I think I could furnish him with an original, which, if artfully represented, and connected with proper incidents, might be very successfully introduced into comedy. The person I have in view is my neighbour Stilotes.

Stilotes, in his youth, was esteemed to have good sense, and a tolerable taste for letters; as he gained some reputation at the university in the exercises usual at that place. But as soon as he was freed from the restraint of tutors, the natural restlessness of his temper broke out, and he has never,

from that time to this, applied himself for half an hour together to any single pursuit. He is extremely active in his disposition; but his whole life is one incessant whirl of trifles. He rises, perhaps, with a full intent of amusing himself all the morning with his gun: but before he has got half the length of a field, he recollects that he owes a visit, which he must instantly pay: accordingly his horse is saddled, and he sets out. But in his way he remembers that he has not given proper orders about such a flower, and he must absolutely return, or the whole economy of his nursery will be ruined. Thus, in whatever action you find him engaged, you may be sure it is the very reverse of what he proposed. Yet with all this quickness of transition and vivacity of spirits, he is so indolent in every thing which has the air of business, that he is at least two or three months before he can persuade himself to open any letter he receives; and, from the same disposition, he has suffered the dividends of his stocks to run on for many years, without receiving a shilling of the interest. Stilotes is possessed of an estate in Dorsetshire, but that being the place where his chief business lies, he chooses constantly to reside with a friend near London. This person submits to his humour and his company, in hopes that Stilotes will consider him in his will: but it is more than possible that he will never endure the fatigue of signing one. However, having here every thing provided for him but clothes and pocket-money, he lives perfectly to his satisfaction, in full employment without any real business; and while those who look after his estate take care to supply him with sufficient to answer those two ar-

ticles, he is entirely unconcerned as to all the rest : though, when he is disposed to appear more than ordinarily important, he will gravely harangue upon the roguery of stewards, and complain that his rents will scarce maintain him in powder and shot half the partridge season. In short, Stilotes is one of the most extraordinary compounds of indolence and activity that I ever met with ; and, as I know you have a taste for curiosities, I present you with his character as a rarity that merits a place in your collection. Adieu. I am, &c.

XXXIX. TO PHIDIPPUS.

'Tis well, my friend, that the age of transformation is no more ; otherwise I should tremble for your severe attack upon the Muses, and expect to see the story of your metamorphosis embellish the poetical miracles of some modern Ovid. But it is long since the fate of the Pierides has gained any credit in the world, and you may now, in full security, condemn the divinities of Parnassus, and speak irreverently of the daughters of Jove himself. You see, nevertheless, how highly the ancients conceived of them, when they thus represented them as the offspring of the great father of gods and men. You reject, I know, this article of the heathen creed : but I may venture, however, to assert, that philosophy will confirm what fable has thus invented, and that the Muses are, in strict truth, of heavenly extraction.

The charms of the fine arts are, indeed, literally derived from the Author of all nature, and founded in the original frame and constitution of the human

mind. Accordingly, the general principles of taste are common to our whole species, and arise from that internal sense of beauty which every man, in some degree at least, evidently possesses. No rational mind can be so wholly void of all perceptions of this sort, as to be capable of contemplating the various objects that surround him, with one equal coldness and indifference. There are certain forms which must necessarily fill the soul with agreeable ideas; and she is instantly determined in her approbation of them, previous to all reasonings concerning their use and convenience. It is upon these general principles that what is called fine taste in the arts is founded; and, consequently, is by no means so precarious and unsettled an idea as you choose to describe it. The truth is, taste is nothing more than this universal sense of beauty, rendered more exquisite by genius, and more correct by cultivation: and it is from the simple and original ideas of this sort, that the mind learns to form her judgment of the higher and more complex kinds. Accordingly, the whole circle of the imitative and oratorical arts is governed by the same general rules of criticism; and to prove the certainty of these with respect to any one of them, is to establish their validity with regard to all the rest. I will, therefore, consider the criterion of taste in relation only to fine writing.

Each species of composition has its distinct perfections; and it would require a much larger compass than a letter affords to prove their respective beauties to be derived from truth and nature; and consequently reducible to a regular and precise standard. I will only mention, therefore, those

general properties which are essential to them all, and without which they must necessarily be defective in their several kinds. These, I think, may be comprehended under uniformity in the designs, variety and resemblance in the metaphors and similitudes, together with propriety and harmony in the diction. Now some or all of these qualities constantly attend our ideas of beauty, and necessarily raise that agreeable perception of the mind, in what object soever they appear. The charms of fine composition, then, are so far from existing only in the heated imagination of an enthusiastic admirer, that they result from the constitution of nature herself. And, perhaps, the principles of criticism are as certain and indisputable even as those of the mathematics. Thus, for instance, that order is preferable to confusion, that harmony is more pleasing than dissonance, with some few other axioms upon which the science is built, are truths which strike at once upon the mind with the same force of conviction, as that the whole is greater than any of its parts, or that, if from equals you take away equals, the remainder will be equal. And, in both cases, the propositions which rest upon these plain and obvious maxims seem equally capable of the same evidence of demonstration.

But as every intellectual as well as animal faculty is improved and strengthened by exercise, the more the soul exerts this her internal sense of beauty upon any particular object, the more she will enlarge and refine her relish of that peculiar species. For this reason, the works of those great masters, whose performances have been long and generally admired, supply a farther criterion of fine taste;

equally fixed and certain as that which is immediately derived from nature herself. The truth is, fine writing is only the art of raising agreeable sensations of the most intellectual kind; and, therefore, as by examining those original forms which are adapted to awaken this perception in the mind, we learn what those qualities are which constitute beauty in general; so, by observing the peculiar construction of those compositions of genius which have always pleased, we perfect our idea of fine writing in particular. It is this united approbation, in persons of different ages, and of various characters and languages, that Longinus has made the test of the true sublime; and he might with equal justice have extended the same criterion to all the inferior excellences of elegant composition. Thus, the deference paid to the performances of the great masters of antiquity, is fixed upon just and solid reasons: it is not because Aristotle and Horace have given us the rules of criticism, that we submit to their authority; it is because those rules are derived from works which have been distinguished by the uninterrupted admiration of all the more improved part of mankind, from their earliest appearance down to this present hour. For whatever, through a long series of ages, has been universally esteemed as beautiful, cannot but be conformable to our just and natural ideas of beauty.

The opposition, however, which sometimes divides the opinions of those whose judgments may be supposed equal and perfect, is urged as a powerful objection against the reality of a fixed canon of criticism: it is a proof, you think, that, after all which can be said of fine taste, it must ultimately

be resolved into the peculiar relish of each individual. But this diversity of sentiments will not, of itself, destroy the evidence of the criterion; since the same effect may be produced by numberless other causes. A thousand accidental circumstances may concur in counteracting the force of the rule, even allowing it to be ever so fixed and invariable, when left in its free and uninfluenced state. Not to mention that false bias which party or personal dislike may fix upon the mind, the most unprejudiced critic will find it difficult to disengage himself entirely from those partial affections in favour of particular beauties, to which either the general course of his studies, or the peculiar cast of his temper, may have rendered him most sensible. But as perfection, in any works of genius, results from the united beauty and propriety of its several distinct parts; and as it is impossible that any human compositions should possess all those qualities in their highest and most sovereign degree; the mind, when she pronounces judgment upon any piece of this sort, is apt to decide of its merit, as those circumstances which she most admires either prevail or are deficient. Thus, for instance, the excellency of the Roman masters, in painting, consists in beauty of design, nobleness of attitude, and delicacy of expression; but the charms of good colouring are wanting. On the contrary, the Venetian school is said to have neglected design a little too much; but at the same time has been more attentive to the grace and harmony of well-disposed lights and shades. Now it will be admitted, by all admirers of this noble art, that no composition of the pencil can be perfect, where

either of these qualities are absent ; yet the most accomplished judge may be so particularly struck with one or other of these excellences, in preference to the rest, as to be influenced in his censure or applause of the whole tablature by the predominancy or deficiency of his favourite beauty. Something of this kind (where the meaner prejudices do not operate) is ever, I am persuaded, the occasion of that diversity of sentences which we occasionally hear pronounced, by the most improved judges, on the same piece. But this only shows that much caution is necessary to give a fine taste its full and unobstructed effect ; not that it is in itself uncertain and precarious. I am, &c.

XL. TO PALAMEDES.

YOUR resolution to decline those overtures of acquaintance which Mezentius, it seems, has lately made to you, is agreeable to the refined principles which have ever influenced your conduct. A man of your elegant notions of integrity will observe the same delicacy with respect to his companions, as Cæsar did with regard to his wife, and refuse all commerce with persons even but of suspected honour. It would not, indeed, be doing justice to Mezentius, to represent him in that number : for though his hypocrisy has preserved to him some few friends, and his immense wealth draws after him many followers, the world in general are by no means divided in their sentiments concerning him.

But, whilst you can have his picture from so many better hands, why are you desirous of seeing it by

mine? It is a painful employment to contemplate human nature in its deformities; as there is nothing, perhaps, more difficult, than to execute a portrait of the characteristical kind with strength and spirit. However, since you have assigned me the task, I do not think myself at liberty to refuse it: especially as it is your interest to see him delineated in his true form.

Mezentius, with the designs and artifice of a Catiline, affects the integrity and patriotism of a Cato. Liberty, justice, and honour, are words which he knows perfectly well how to apply with address; and having them always ready, upon proper occasions, he conceals the blackest purposes under the fairest appearances. For void, as in truth he is, of every worthy principle, he has too much policy not to pretend to the noblest; well knowing, that counterfeit virtues are the most successful vices. It is by arts of this kind that, notwithstanding he has shown himself unrestrained by the most sacred engagements of society, and uninfluenced by the most tender affections of nature, he has still been able to retain some degree of credit in the world; for he never sacrifices his honour to his interest, that he does not, in some less considerable, but more open instance, make a concession of his interest to his honour; and thus, while he sinks his character on one side, very artfully raises it on the other. Accordingly, under pretence of the most scrupulous delicacy of conscience, he lately resigned a post which he held under my lord Godolphin; when, at the same time, he was endeavouring, by the most shameless artifices and evasions, to deceive and de-

fraud a friend of mine in one of the most solemn and important transactions that can pass between man and man.

But will you not suspect that I am describing a phantom of my own imagination, when I tell you, after this, that he has erected himself into a reformer of manners, and is so injudiciously officious as to draw the inquiry of the world upon his own morals, by attempting to expose the defects of others? A man who ventures publicly to point out the blemishes of his contemporaries, should, at least, be free from any uncommon stain himself, and have nothing remarkably dark in the complexion of his own private character. But Mezentius, not satisfied with being vicious, has at length determined to be ridiculous; and, after having wretchedly squandered his youth and his patrimony in riot and dissoluteness, is contemptibly misspending his old age in measuring impotent syllables, and dealing out pointless abuse. Farewell. I am, &c.

XLI. TO ORONTES.

March 10, 1738.

WHAT haughty Sacharissa has put you out of humour with her whole sex? For it is some disappointment, I suspect, of the tender kind, that has thus sharpened the edge of your satire, and pointed its invective against the fairer half of our species. You were not mistaken, however, when you supposed I should prove no convert to your doctrine; but rise up as an advocate, where I profess myself

an admirer. I am not, it is true, altogether of old Montagne's opinion, that the souls of both sexes *sont jettez* (as he expresses it) *en mesme moules*: on the contrary, I am willing enough to join with you in thinking that they may be wrought off from different models. Yet, the casts may be equally perfect, though it should be allowed that they are essentially different. Nature, it is certain, has traced out a separate course of action for the two sexes; and as they are appointed to distinct offices of life, it is not improbable that there may be something distinct likewise in the frame of their minds; that there may be a kind of sex in the very soul.

I cannot, therefore, but wonder that Plato should have thought it reasonable to admit them into an equal share of the dignities and offices of his imaginary commonwealth; and that the wisdom of the ancient Egyptians should have so strangely inverted the evident intentions of Providence, as to confine the men to domestic affairs, whilst the women, it is said, were engaged abroad in the active and laborious scenes of business. History, it must be owned, will supply some few female instances of all the most masculine virtues: but appearances of that extraordinary kind are too uncommon to support the notion of a general equality in the natural powers of their minds.

Thus much, however, seems evident, that there are certain moral boundaries which Nature has drawn between the two sexes, and that neither of them can pass over the limits of the other, without equally deviating from the beauty and decorum of

their respective characters. Boadicea, in armour, is to me, at least, as extravagant a sight as Achilles in petticoats.

In determining, therefore, the comparative merit of the two sexes, it is no derogation from female excellency, that it differs in kind from that which distinguishes the male part of our species. And if, in general, it shall be found, (what, upon an impartial inquiry, I believe, will most certainly be found) that women fill up their appointed circle of action with greater regularity and dignity than men, the claim of preference cannot justly be decided in our favour. In the prudential and economical part of life, I think it undeniable that they rise far above us. And if true fortitude of mind is best discovered by a cheerful resignation to the measures of Providence, we shall not find reason, perhaps, to claim that most singular of the human virtues as our peculiar privilege. There are numbers of the other sex, who, from the natural delicacy of their constitution, pass through one continued scene of suffering, from their cradles to their graves, with a firmness of resolution that would deserve so many statues to be erected to their memories, if heroism were not estimated more by the splendour than the merit of actions.

But, whatever real difference there may be between the moral or intellectual powers of the male and female mind, nature does not seem to have marked the distinction so strongly as our vanity is willing to imagine: and, after all, perhaps, education will be found to constitute the principal superiority. It must be acknowledged, at least, that in this article we have every advantage over the softer

sex, that art and industry can possibly secure to us. The most animating examples of Greece and Rome are set before us as early as we are capable of any observation ; and the noblest compositions of the ancients are given into our hands, almost as soon as we have strength to hold them : while the employments of the other sex, at the same period of life, are generally the reverse of every thing that can open and enlarge their minds, or fill them with just and rational notions. The truth of it is, female education is so much worse than none, as it is better to leave the mind to its natural and uninstructed suggestions, than to lead it into false pursuits, and contract its views by turning them upon the lowest and most trifling objects. We seem, indeed, by the manner in which we suffer the youth of that sex to be trained, to consider women agreeably to the opinion of certain Mahometan doctors, and treat them as if we believed they have no souls : why else are they

Bred only and completed to the taste
Of lustful appetite, to sing, to dance,
To dress, and troll the tongue, and roll the eye ?

Milton.

This strange neglect of cultivating the female mind, can hardly be allowed as good policy, when it is considered how much the interest of society is concerned in the rectitude of their understandings. That season of every man's life which is most susceptible of the strongest impressions, is necessarily under female direction ; as there are few instances, perhaps, in which that sex is not one of the secret springs which regulates the most important movements of private or public transactions. What Cato

observed of his countrymen, is, in one respect, true of every nation under the sun: "The Romans," said he, "govern the world, but it is the women that govern the Romans." Let not, however, a certain pretended Cato of your acquaintance take occasion, from this maxim, to insult, a second time, that innocence he has so often injured: for I will tell him another maxim as true as the former; that "there are circumstances wherein no woman has power enough to control a man of spirit."

If it be true, then, (as true beyond all peradventure it is) that female influence is thus extensive; nothing, certainly, can be of more importance, than to give it a proper tendency, by the assistance of a well-directed education. Far am I from recommending any attempts to render women learned; yet, surely, it is necessary they should be raised above ignorance. Such a general tincture of the most useful sciences, as may serve to free the mind from vulgar prejudices, and give it a relish for the rational exercise of its powers, might very justly enter into the plan of female erudition. That sex might be taught to turn the course of their reflections into a proper and advantageous channel, without any danger of rendering them too elevated for the feminine duties of life. In a word, I would have them considered as designed by Providence for use as well as show, and trained up, not only as women, but as rational creatures. Adieu, I am, &c.

XLII. TO PALEMON.

May 5, 1746.

WHILST you are engaged in turning over the records of past ages, and tracing our constitution from its rise through all its several periods, I sometimes amuse myself with reviewing certain annals of an humbler kind, and considering the various turns and revolutions that have happened in the sentiments and affections of those with whom I have been most connected. A history of this sort is not, indeed, so striking as that which exhibits kings and heroes to our view; but may it not be contemplated, Palemon, with more private advantage?

Methinks we should scarce be so embittered against those who differ from us in principle or practice, were we oftener to reflect how frequently we have varied from ourselves in both those articles. It was but yesterday that Lucius, whom I once knew a very zealous advocate for the most controverted points of faith, was arguing, with equal warmth and vehemence, on the principles of deism; as Bathillus, who set out in the world a cool infidel, has lately drawn up one of the most plausible defences of the mystic devotees, that, perhaps, was ever written. The truth is, a man must either have passed his whole life without reflecting, or his thoughts must have run in a very limited channel, who has not often experienced many remarkable revolutions of mind.

The same kind of inconstancy is observable in our pursuits of happiness as well as truth. Thus our friend Curio, whom we both remember, in the for -

mer part of his life, enamoured of every fair face he met, and enjoying every woman he could purchase, has at last collected this diffusive flame into a single point, and could not be tempted to commit an infidelity to his marriage vow, though as form as beautiful as the Venus of Apelles was to court his embrace: whilst Apamenthes, on the other hand, who was the most sober and domestic man I ever knew, till he lost his wife, commenced a rake at five and forty, and is now for ever in a tavern or stew.

Who knows, Palemon, whether even this humour of moralizing, which, as you often tell me, so strongly marks my character, may not wear out in time, and be succeeded by a brighter and more lively vein? Who knows but I may court again the mistress I have forsaken, and die at last in the arms of ambition? Cleora, at least, who frequently rallies me upon that fever of my youth, assures me I am only in the intermission of a fit, which will certainly return. But though there may be some excuse, perhaps, in exchanging our follies or our errors, there can be none in resuming those we have once happily quitted: for surely he must be a very injudicious sportsman, who can be tempted to beat over those fields again which have ever disappointed him of his game. Farewell. I am, &c.

XLIII. TO EUPHRONIUS.

July 2, 1742

It is a pretty observation, which I have somewhere met, that “the most pleasing of all harmony arises from the censure of a single person, when mixed

with the general applauses of the world." I almost suspect, therefore, that you are considering the interest of your admired author, when you call upon me for my farther objections to his performance; and are for joining me, perhaps, to the number of those who advance his reputation by opposing it. The truth, however, is, you could not have chosen a critic (if a critic I might venture to call myself) who has a higher esteem for all the compositions of Mr. Pope; as, indeed, I look upon every thing that comes from his hands with the same degree of veneration as if it were consecrated by antiquity. Nevertheless, though I greatly revere his judgment, I cannot absolutely renounce my own; and since some have been bold enough to advance, that even the sacred writings themselves do not always speak the language of the Spirit, I may have leave to suspect of the poets what has been asserted of the prophets, and suppose that their pens are not at all seasons under the guidance of inspiration. But as there is something extremely ungrateful to the mind, in dwelling upon those little spots that necessarily attend the lustre of all human merit; you must allow me to join his beauties with his imperfections, and admire with rapture, after having condemned with regret.

There is a certain modern figure of speech, which the authors of the art of sinking in poetry have called the "diminishing." This, so far as it relates to words only, consists in debasing a great idea, by expressing it in a term of meaner import. Mr. Pope has himself now and then fallen into this kind of the profound, which he has with such uncommon wit and spirit exposed in the writings of

others. Thus Agamemnon, addressing himself to Menelaus and Ulysses, asks,

And can you, chiefs, without a blush, survey
Whole *troops* before you, *labouring* in the *fray*? B. iv.

So likewise Pandarus, speaking of Diomed, who is performing the utmost efforts of heroism in the field of battle, says,

some guardian of the skies,
Involved in clouds, protects him in the *fray*. v. 235.

But what would you think, Euphronius, were you to hear of the “impervious foam” and “rough waves” of a “brook?” would it not put you in mind of that droll thought of the ingenious Dr. Young, in one of his epistles to our author, where he talks of a “puddle in a storm?” Yet, by thus confounding the properties of the highest objects with those of the lowest, Mr. Pope has turned one of the most pleasing similies in the whole Iliad into downright burlesque.

As when some simple swain his cot forsakes,
And wide through fens an unknown journey takes;
If chance a swelling *brook* his passage stay,
And *foam impervious* cross the wanderer's way,
Confused he stops, a length of country pass'd,
Eyes the *rough waves*, and tired returns at last. v. 734.

This swelling brook, however, of Mr. Pope, is in Homer a rapid river, rushing with violence into the sea :

Στην ἐπ' ὠκυροῦ ποταμῷ ἀλαδὲ προρεόντι. v. 598.

It is one of the essential requisites of an epic poem, and indeed of every other kind of serious

poetry, that the style be raised above common language ; as nothing takes off so much from that solemnity of diction, from which the poet ought never to depart, as idioms of a vulgar and familiar cast. Mr. Pope has sometimes neglected this important rule ; but most frequently in the introduction of his speeches. To mention only a few instances :

That done, to Phœnix Ajax gave the sign. ix. 291.

With that stern Ajax his long silence broke. ix. 735.

With that the venerable warrior rose. x. 150.

With that they stepp'd aside, &c. x. 415.

whereas Homer generally prefaces his speeches with a dignity of phrase, that calls up the attention of the reader to what is going to be uttered. Milton has very happily copied his manner in this particular, as in many others : and though he often falls into a flatness of expression, he has never once, I think, committed that error upon occasions of this kind. He usually ushers in his harangues with something characteristical of the speaker, or that points out some remarkable circumstance of his present situation, in the following manner :

Satan, with bold words

Breaking the horrid silence, thus began. i. 82.

Him thus answer'd soon his bold compeer. i. 125.

He ended, frowning :

On the other side uprose

Belial,

And with persuasive accents thus began. ii. 106.

If you compare the effect which an introduction of this descriptive sort has upon the mind, with those

low and unawakening expressions which I have marked in the lines I just now quoted from our English Iliad, you will not, perhaps, consider my objection as altogether without foundation.

All opposition of ideas should be carefully avoided in a poem of this kind, as unbecoming the gravity of the heroic Muse. But does not Mr. Pope sometimes sacrifice simplicity to false ornament, and lose the majesty of Homer in the affectations of Ovid? Of this sort a severe critic would perhaps esteem his calling an army, marching with spears erect, "a moving iron wood:"

Such and so thick the embattled squadrons stood,
With spears erect, a moving iron wood.

There seems also to be an inconsistency in the two parts of this description; for the troops are represented as standing still, at the same time that the circumstance mentioned of the spears should rather imply (as indeed the truth is) that they were in motion. But if the translator had been faithful to his author, in this passage, neither of these objections could have been raised: for in Homer it is,

Τοιαί

πυκιναὶ κινυντο φάλαγγες

Κυανεαί, σάκεσιν τε καὶ εὐχεσί πεφρικυιαί. iv. 280.

Is there not likewise some little tendency to a pun, in those upbraiding lines which Hector addresses to Paris?

For thee great Ilion's guardian heroes fall,
Till heaps of dead alone defend the wall.

Mr. Pope at least deserts his guide, in order to

give us this conceit of dead men *defending* a town ; for the original could not possibly lead him into it. Homer, with a plainness suitable to the occasion, only tells us,

Λαοὶ μὲν φθινυθούσι περὶ πτόλιν, αἰπὺ τὲ τείχος,
Μαρναμένοι. vi. 327

Teucer, in the eighth book, aims a dart at Hector, which, missing its way, slew Gorgythion ; upon which we are told,

Another shaft the raging archer threw ;
That other shaft with erring fury flew ;
From Hector Phœbus turn'd the flying wound :
Yet fell not dry or guiltless to the ground.

A *flying wound* is a thought exactly in the spirit of Ovid ; but highly unworthy of Pope as well as of Homer ; and, indeed, there is not the least foundation for it in the original. But what do you think of the shaft that fell *dry* or *guiltless* ? where, you see, one figurative epithet is added as explanatory of the other. The doubling of epithets, without raising the idea, is not allowable in compositions of any kind ; but least of all in poetry. It is, says Quintilian, as if every common soldier in an army were to be attended with a valet ; you increase your number, without adding to your strength.

But if it be a fault to crowd epithets of the same import one upon the other, it is much more so to employ such as call off the attention from the principal idea to be raised, and turn it upon little or foreign circumstances. When Æneas is wounded by Tydides, Homer describes Venus as conducting him through the thickest tumult of the enemy,

and conveying him from the field of battle. But while we are following the hero with our whole concern, and trembling for the danger which surrounds him on all sides, Mr. Pope leads us off from our anxiety for Æneas, by an uninteresting epithet relating to the structure of those instruments of death which were every where flying about him; and we are coldly informed, that the darts were feathered :

Safe through the rushing horse and feather'd flight
Of sounding shafts, she bears him through the fight.

v. 393.

But as his epithets sometimes debase the general image to be raised, so they now and then adorn them with a false brilliancy. Thus, speaking of a person slain by an arrow, he calls it a "pointed death," iv. 607. Describing another who was attacked by numbers at once, he tells us,

A grove of lances glitter'd at his breast. iv. 621.

and representing a forest on fire, he says,

In blazing heaps the grove's old honours fall,
And one refulgent ruin levels all. x. 201.

But one of the most unpardonable instances of this kind is, where he relates the death of Hypsenor, a person who, it seems, exercised the sacerdotal office :

On his broad shoulder fell the forceful brand;
Thence glancing downward, lopp'd his holy hand,
And stain'd with sacred blood the blushing sand.

To take the force of this epithet, we must suppose that the redness which appeared upon the sand, on

this occasion, was an effect of its blushing to find itself stained with the blood of so sacred a person : than which there cannot be a more forced and unnatural thought. It puts me in mind of a passage in a French dramatic writer, who has formed a play upon the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. The hapless maid, addressing herself to the dagger, which lies by the side of her lover, breaks out into the following exclamation :

Ah ! voici le poignard qui du sang de son maitre
S' est souillé lachement : il en *rougit* le traître.

Boileau, taking notice of these lines, observes, *toutes les glaces du Nord ensemble ne sont pas, à mon sens, plus froides que cette pensée.* But of the two poets, I know not whether Mr. Pope is not most to be condemned ; for whatever shame the poniard might take to itself for being concerned in the murder of the lover ; it is certain that the sand had not the least share in the death of the priest.

The ancient critics have insisted much upon propriety of language ; and, indeed, one may with great justice say what the insulted Job does to his impertinent friends, “ how forcible are right words ! ” The truth is, though the sentiment must always support the expression, yet the expression must give grace and efficacy to the sentiment ; and the same thought shall frequently be admired or condemned, according to the merit of the particular phrase in which it is conveyed. For this reason Julius Cæsar, in a treatise which he wrote concerning the Latin language, calls a judicious choice of words, “ the origin of eloquence : ” as, indeed,

neither oratory nor poetry can be raised to any degree of perfection, where this their principal root is neglected. In this art Virgil particularly excels; and it is the inimitable grace of his words (as Mr. Dryden somewhere justly observes) wherein that beauty principally consists, which gives so inexpressible a pleasure to him, who best understands their force. No man was ever a more skilful master of this powerful art than Mr. Pope; as he has, upon several occasions throughout this translation, raised and dignified his style with certain antiquated words and phrases, that are most wonderfully solemn and majestic. I cannot, however, forbear mentioning an instance, where he has employed an obsolete term less happily, I think, than is his general custom. It occurs in some lines which I just now quoted for another purpose:

On his broad shoulder fell the forceful *brand*;
Thence glancing downward, lopp'd his holy hand. v. 105.

Brand is sometimes used by Spenser for a sword; and in that sense it is here introduced. But as we still retain this word in a different application, it will always be improper to adopt it in its antiquated meaning, because it must necessarily occasion ambiguity; an error in style of all others the most to be avoided. Accordingly, every reader of the lines I have quoted must take up an idea very different from that which the poet intends, and which he will carry on with him, till he arrives at the middle of the second verse. And if he happens to be unacquainted with the language of our old writers, when he comes to

Lopp'd his holy hand,

he will be lost in a confusion of images, and have absolutely no idea remaining.

There is another uncommon elegance in the management of words, which requires a very singular turn of genius, and great delicacy of judgment to attain. As the art I just before mentioned turns upon employing antiquated words with force and propriety, so this consists in giving the grace of novelty to the received and current terms of a language, by applying them in a new and unexpected manner :

Dixeris egregie, notum si callida verbum
Reddiderit junctura novum, *Hor.*

The great caution, however, to be observed in any attempt of this kind, is so judiciously to connect the expressions, as to remove every doubt concerning the signification in which they are designed : for as perspicuity is the end and supreme excellency of writing, there cannot be a more fatal objection to an author's style, than that it stands in need of a commentator. But will not this objection lie against the following verse ?

Next *artful* Phereclus untimely fell. v. 75.

This word *artful* is here taken out of its appropriated acceptation, in order to express

ὅς χερσιν ἐπιστάτο δαιδαλα πάντα
Τεύχειν.

But, however allowable it may be (as, indeed, it is not only allowable, but graceful) to raise a word above its ordinary import, when the *callida junctura* (as Horace calls it) determines at once the

sense in which it is used : yet it should never be cast so far back from its customary meaning, as to stand for an idea which has no relation to what it implies in its primary and natural state. This would be introducing uncertainty and confusion into a language, and turning every sentence into a riddle. Accordingly, after we have travelled on through the several succeeding lines in this passage, we are obliged to change the idea with which we set out ; and find, at last, that by the *artful* Phereclus we are to understand, not what we at first apprehend, a man of cunning and design, but one who is skilled in the mechanical arts.

It is with a liberty of the same unsuccessful kind, that Mr. Pope has rendered

Τον προτερος προσειπε Λυκαονος αγλαος υιος.
v. 276.

Stern Lycaon's warlike race begun.

I know not by what figure of speech the whole race of a man can denote his next immediate descendant : and I fear no synecdoche can acquit this expression of nonsense. The truth is, whoever ventures to strike out of the common road, must be more than ordinarily careful, or he will probably lose his way.

This reminds me of a passage or two, where our poet has been extremely injurious to the sense of his author, and made him talk a language which he never uses ; the language, I mean, of absurdity. In the sixth Iliad, Agamemnon assures Menelaus,

ΠΑΝΤΕΣ
Ιλιθ εξαπολοιατ', ακηδεστοι. vi. 60.

But, in Mr. Pope's version, that chief tells his brother,

Ilion shall perish whole, and *bury* all.

Perhaps it may be over nice to remark, that, as the destruction of Troy is first mentioned, it has a little the appearance of nonsense to talk afterwards of her burying her sons. However, the latter part of this verse directly contradicts the original; for Agamemnon is so far from asserting that Ilion should bury all her inhabitants, that he pronounces, positively, they should not be buried at all: a calamity, in the opinion of the ancients, of all others the most terrible. But, possibly, the error may lie in the printer, not in the poet; and, perhaps, the line originally stood thus:

Ilion shall perish whole, *unburied* all.

If so, both my objections vanish: and those who are conversant with the press, will not think this supposition improbable; since much more unlikely mistakes often happen by the carelessness of compositors.

But, though I am willing to make all the allowance possible to an author who raises our admiration too often, not to have a right to the utmost candour wherever he fails; yet I can find no excuse for an unaccountable absurdity he has fallen into, in translating a passage of the tenth book. Diomed and Ulysses, taking advantage of the night, set out in order to view the Trojan camp. In their way they meet with Dolon, who is going from thence to the Grecian, upon an errand of the same kind. After having seized this unfortunate adven-

turer, and examined him concerning the situation and designs of the enemy; Diomed draws his sword, and strikes off Dolon's head, in the very instant that he is supplicating for mercy:

Φθεγγόμενός δ' ἀρα τὲ γέ κάρη κονίησιν ἐμύχθη. κ. 457.

Mr. Pope has turned this into a most extraordinary miracle, by assuring us that the head spoke after it had quitted the body:

The head yet speaking, *mutter'd as it fell.*

This puts me in mind of a wonder of the same kind in the "Fairy Queen," where Corflambo is represented as blaspheming, after his head had been struck off by prince Arthur:

He smote at him with all his might and main
So furiously, that, ere he wist, he found
His head before him tumbling on the ground,
The whiles his babbling tongue did yet blaspheme,
And cursed his God, that did him so confound.

Book iv. 8.

But Corflambo was the son of a giantess, and could conquer whole kingdoms by only looking at them. We may, perhaps, therefore allow him to talk, when every other man must be silent: whereas there is nothing in the history of poor Dolon that can give him the least pretence to this singular privilege. The truth is, Mr. Pope seems to have been led into this blunder by Scaliger, who has given the same sense to the verse; and then with great wisdom and gravity observes, *falsum est a pulmone caput avulsum loqui posse.*

The most pleasing picture in the whole Iliad, is, I think, the parting of Hector and Andromache:

and our excellent translator has, in general, very successfully copied it. But in some places he seems not to have touched it with that delicacy of pencil which graces the original; as he has entirely lost the beauty of one of the figures.—Hector is represented as extending his arms to embrace the little Astyanax, who being terrified with the unusual appearance of a man in armour, throws himself back upon his nurse's breast, and falls into tears. But, though the hero and his son were designed to draw our principal attention, Homer intended, likewise, that we should cast a glance towards the nurse. Accordingly, he does not mark her out merely by the name of her office; but adds an epithet to show that she makes no inconsiderable figure in the piece: he does not simply call her *τιθηνη*, but *εὖζωνος τιθηνη*. This circumstance Mr. Pope has entirely overlooked:

Ὡς εἰπων, οὐ παῖδος ορεξάτο φαιδιμος Ἑκτωρ.
 Ἀψ' δ' ὁ παῖς πρὸς κόλπον εὖζωνοιο τιθηνης
 Ἐκλινθη ἰαχων, πατρός φίλου ὧσιν ατυχθεις,
 Ταρβησας χαλκὸν τε ἰδε λοφὸν ἱππιοχαιτην,
 Δεινὸν ἀπ' ἀκροτάτης κορυθὸς νευοντα νοησας.
 Ἐκ δ' ἐγέλασσε πατὴρ τε φίλος, καὶ ποτνία μητηρ.
 Αὐτικ' ἀπο κρατὸς κορυθ' εἴλετο φαιδιμος Ἑκτωρ,
 Καὶ τὴν μὲν κατέθηκεν ἐπὶ χθονὶ παμφανώσαν.

vi. 466.

Thus having said, the illustrious chief of Troy
 Stretch'd his fond arms to clasp the lovely boy;
 The babe clung crying to his nurse's breast,
 Scared by the dazzling helm and nodding crest:
 With secret pleasure each fond parent smiled,
 And Hector hasted to relieve his child:
 The glittering terrors from his head unbound,
 And placed the beaming helmet on the ground.

I was going to object to the *glittering terrors*, in the last line but one: but I have already taken notice of these little affected expressions, where the substantive is set at variance with its attribute.

It is the observation of Quintilian, that no poet ever excelled Homer in the sublimity with which he treats great subjects, or in the delicacy and propriety he always discovers in the management of small ones. There is a passage in the ninth Iliad, which will justify the truth of the latter of these observations. When Achilles receives Ajax and Ulysses in his tent, who were sent to him in the name of Agamemnon, in order to prevail with him to return to the army, Homer gives a very minute account of the entertainment which was prepared for them upon that occasion. It is impossible, perhaps, in modern language, to preserve the same dignity in descriptions of this kind, which so considerably raises the original: and, indeed, Mr. Pope warns his readers not to expect much beauty in the picture. However, a translator should be careful not to throw in any additional circumstances, which may lower and debase the piece; which yet Mr. Pope has, in his version of the following line:

Πυρ δὲ Μενoitιαδης δαιεν μεγα, ἰσοθεος φως.

ix. 211.

Meanwhile Patroclus *sweats*, the fire to raise.

Own the truth, Euphronius: does not this give you the idea of a greasy cook at a kitchen fire? whereas nothing of this kind is suggested in the original.

On the contrary, the epithet *ισοθεος*, seems to have been added by Homer, in order to reconcile us to the meanness of the action, by reminding us of the high character of the person who is engaged in it; and as Mr. Addison observes of Virgil's husbandman, that "he tosses about his dung with an air of gracefulness;" one may, with the same truth, say of Homer's hero, that he lights his fire with an air of dignity.

I intended to have closed these hasty objections, with laying before you some of those passages, where Mr. Pope seems to have equalled, or excelled his original. But I perceive I have already extended my letter beyond a reasonable limit: I will reserve, therefore, that more pleasing, as well as much easier task, to some future occasion. In the mean time, I desire you will look upon those remarks, not as proceeding from a spirit of cavil (than which I know not any more truly contemptible,) but as an instance of my having read your favourite poet with that attention, which his own unequalled merit and your judicious recommendation most deservedly claim. I am, &c.

XLIV. TO PALAMEDES.

April 18, 1739.

I HAVE had occasion, a thousand times since I saw you, to wish myself "in the land where all things are forgotten;" at least, that I did not live in the memory of certain restless mortals of your acquaintance, who are visitors by profession. The misfortune is, no retirement is so remote, nor sanctuary so sacred, as to afford a protection from their impertinence; and though one were to fly to

the desert, and take refuge in the cells of saints and hermits, one should be alarmed with their unmeaning voice, crying even in the wilderness. They spread themselves, in truth, over the whole face of the land, and lay waste the fairest hours of conversation. For my own part, (to speak of them in a style suitable to their taste and talents) I look upon them, not as paying visits, but visitations; and am never obliged to give audience to one of this species, that I do not consider myself as under a judgment for those numberless hours which I have spent in vain. If these sons and daughters of idleness and folly would be persuaded to enter into an exclusive society among themselves, the rest of the world might possess their moments unmolested: but nothing less will satisfy them than opening a general commerce, and sailing into every port where choice or chance may drive them. Were we to live, indeed, to the years of the antediluvians, one might afford to resign some part of one's own time in charitable relief of the unsufferable weight of theirs; but, since the days of man are shrunk into a few hasty revolutions of the sun, whole afternoons are much too considerable a sacrifice to be offered up to tame civility. What heightens the contempt of this character is, that they who have so much of the form, have always least of the power of friendship; and though they will "craze their chariot wheels" (as Milton expresses it) to destroy your repose, they would not drive half the length of a street to assist your distress.

It was owing to an interruption from one of these obsequious intruders, that I was prevented

keeping my engagement with you yesterday; and you must indulge me in this discharge of my invective against the ridiculous occasion of so mortifying a disappointment. Adieu. I am, &c.

XLV. TO HORTENSIUS.

May 8, 1757.

To be able to suppress my acknowledgments of the pleasure I received from your approbation, were to show that I do not deserve it; for is it possible to value the praise of the judicious as one ought, and yet be silent under its influence? I can, with strict truth, say of you, what a Greek poet did of Plato, who, reading his performance to a circle where that great philosopher was present, and finding himself deserted, at length, by all the rest of the company, cried out, "I will proceed, nevertheless, for Plato is himself an audience."

True fame, indeed, is no more in the gift than in the possession of numbers, as it is only in the disposal of the wise and the impartial. But if both those qualifications must concur to give validity to a vote of this kind, how little reason has an author to be either depressed or elated by general censure or applause!

The triumphs of genius are not like those of ancient heroism, where the meanest captive made a part of the pomp as well as the noblest. It is not the multitude, but the dignity of those that compose her followers, that can add any thing to her real glory; and a single attendant may often render her more truly illustrious than a whole train of common admirers. I am sure, at least, I have no ambition of drawing after me vulgar acclama-

tions ; and, whilst I have the happiness to enjoy your applause, I shall always consider myself in possession of the truest fame. Adieu. I am, &c.

XLVI. TO CLYTANDER.

Sept. 10, 1738.

You, who never forget any thing, can tell me, I dare say, whose observation it is, that, "of all the actions of our life, nothing is more uncommon than to laugh or to cry with a good grace." But, though I cannot recollect the author, I shall always retain his maxim ; as, indeed, every day's occurrences suggest the truth of it to my mind. I had particularly an occasion to see one part of it verified in the treatise I herewith return you ; for never, surely, was mirth more injudiciously directed, than that which this writer of your acquaintance has employed. To droll upon the established religion of a country, and laugh at the most sacred and inviolable of her ordinances, is as far removed from good politics, as it is from good manners. It is, indeed, upon maxims of policy alone, that one can reason with those who pursue the principles which this author has embraced : I will add, therefore, (since, it seems, you sometimes communicate to him my letters,) that to endeavour to lessen that veneration which is due to the religious institutions of a nation, when they neither run counter to any of the great lines of morality, nor oppose the natural rights of mankind, is a sort of zeal, which I know not by what epithet sufficiently to stigmatize : it is attacking the strongest hold of society, and attempting to destroy the firmest guard of human

security. Far am I, indeed, from thinking there is no other, or that the notion of a moral sense is a vain and groundless hypothesis. But wonderfully limited must the experience of those philosophers undoubtedly be, who imagine that an implanted love of virtue is sufficient to conduct the generality of mankind through the paths of moral duties, and supersede the necessity of a farther and more powerful guide. A sense of honour, likewise, where it operates in its true and genuine vigour, is, I confess, a most noble and powerful principle; but far too refined a motive of action, even for the more cultivated part of our species to adopt in general; and, in fact, we find it much oftener professed than pursued. Nor are the laws of a community sufficient to answer all the restraining purposes of government; as there are many moral points which it is impossible to secure by express provisions. Human institutions can reach no farther than to certain general duties, in which the collective welfare of society is more particularly concerned. Whatever else is necessary for the ease and happiness of social intercourse, can be derived only from the assistance of religion; which influences the nicer connexions and dependences of mankind, as it regulates and corrects the heart. How many tyrannies may I exercise as a parent, how many hardships may I inflict as a master, if I take the statutes of my country for the only guides of my actions, and think every thing lawful that is not immediately penal! The truth is, a man may be injured in a variety of instances far more atrociously, than by what the law considers either as a

fraud or a robbery. Now, in cases of this kind, (and many very important cases of this kind there are) to remove the bars of religion, is to throw open the gates of oppression: it is to leave the honest exposed to the injurious inroads of those (and they are far, perhaps, the greatest part of mankind) who, though they would never “do justice and love mercy,” in compliance with the dictates of nature, would scrupulously practise both in obedience to the rules of revelation.

The gross of our species can never, indeed, be influenced by abstract reasoning, nor captivated by the naked charms of virtue: on the contrary, nothing seems more evident than that the generality of mankind must be engaged by sensible objects; must be wrought upon by their hopes and fears. And this has been the constant maxim of all the celebrated legislators, from the earliest establishment of government to this present hour. It is true, indeed, that none have contended more warmly than the ancients for the dignity of human nature, and the native disposition of the soul to be enamoured with the beauty of virtue: but it is equally true, that none have more strenuously inculcated the expediency of adding the authority of religion to the suggestions of nature, and maintaining a reverence to the appointed ceremonies of public worship. The sentiments of Pythagoras (or whoever he be who was author of those verses which pass under that philosopher's name) are well known upon this subject.

Ἀθανάτους μὲν πρῶτα θεοὺς, νόμῳ ὡς διακρίται,
Τίμα.

Many, indeed, are the ancient passages which might be produced in support of this assertion, if it were necessary to produce any passages of this kind to you, whom I have so often heard contend for the same truth with all the awakening powers of learning and eloquence. Suffer me, however, for the benefit of your acquaintance, to remind you of one or two which I do not remember ever to have seen quoted.

Livy has recorded a speech of Appius Claudius Crassus, which he made in opposition to certain demands of the tribunes. That zealous senator warmly argues against admitting the plebeians into a share of the consular dignity, from the power of taking the auspices being originally and solely vested in the patrician order. "But, perhaps," says Crassus, "I shall be told, that the pecking of a chicken, &c. are trifles unworthy of regard: trifling, however, as these ceremonies may now be deemed, it was by the strict observance of them that our ancestors raised this commonwealth to its present point of grandeur." *Parva sunt hæc: sed parva ista non contemnendo, majores nostri maximam hanc rem fecerunt.* Agreeably to this principle, the Roman historian of the life of Alexander describes that monarch, after having killed his friend Clitus, as considering, in his cool moments, whether the gods had not permitted him to be guilty of that horrid act, in punishment for his irreligious neglect of their sacred rites. And Juvenal* imputes the source of that torrent of

* Sat. II. 149.

vice which broke in upon the age in which he wrote, to the general disbelief that prevailed of the public doctrines of their established religion. Those tenets, he tells us, that influenced the glorious conduct of the Curii, the Scipios, the Fabricii, and the Camilli, were in his days so totally exploded, as scarce to be received even by children. It were well for some parts of the Christian world, if the same observation might not with justice be extended beyond the limits of ancient Rome: and I often reflect upon the very judicious remark of a great writer of the last century, who takes notice, that “the generality of Christendom is now well nigh arrived at that fatal condition, which immediately preceded the destruction of the worship of the ancient world; when the face of religion, in their public assemblies, was quite different from that apprehension which men had concerning it in private.”

Nothing, most certainly, could less plead the sanction of reason, than the general rites of pagan worship. Weak and absurd, however, as they were in themselves, and, indeed, in the estimation too of all the wiser sort; yet the more thinking and judicious part, both of their statesmen and philosophers, unanimously concurred in supporting them as sacred and inviolable; well persuaded, no doubt, that religion is the strongest cement in the great structure of moral government. Farewell. I am, &c.

XLVII. TO CLEORA.

Sep. 1.

I LOOK upon every day, wherein I have not some communication with my Cleora, as a day lost ; and I take up my pen every afternoon to write to you, as regularly as I drink my tea, or perform any the like important article of my life.

I frequently bless the happy art that affords me a means of conveying myself to you, at this distance, and, by an easy kind of magic, thus transports me to your parlour at a time when I could not gain admittance by any other method. Of all people in the world, indeed, none are more obliged to this paper commerce, than friends and lovers. It is by this they elude, in some degree, the malevolence of fate, and can enjoy an intercourse with each other, though the Alps themselves shall rise up between them. Even this imaginary participation of your society is far more pleasing to me than the real enjoyment of any other conversation the whole world could supply. The truth is, I have lost all relish for any but yours ; and, if I were invited to an assembly of all the wits of the Augustan age, or all the heroes that Plutarch has celebrated, I should neither have spirits nor curiosity to be of the party. Yet with all this indolence or indifference about me, I would take a voyage as far as the pole to sup with Cleora on a lettuce, or only to hold the bowl while she mixed the syllabub. Such happy evenings I once knew : ah, Cleora ! will they never return ? Adieu.

XLVIII. TO EUPHRONIUS.

I HAVE read the performance you communicated to me, with all the attention you required; and I can, with strict sincerity, apply to your friend's verses, what an ancient has observed of the same number of Spartans who defended the passage of Thermopylæ; *nunquam vidi plures trecentos!* Never, indeed, was there greater energy of language and sentiment united together in the same compass of lines: and it would be an injustice to the world, as well as to himself, to suppress so animated and so useful a composition.

A satirist, of true genius, who is warmed by a generous indignation of vice, and whose censures are conducted by candour and truth, merits the applause of every friend to virtue. He may be considered as a sort of supplement to the legislative authority of his country; as assisting the unavoidable defects of all legal institutions for the regulating of manners, and striking terror even where the divine prohibitions themselves are held in contempt. The strongest defence, perhaps, against the inroads of vice, among the more cultivated part of our species, is well-directed ridicule: they who fear nothing else, dread to be marked out to the contempt and indignation of the world. There is no succeeding in the secret purposes of dishonesty, without preserving some sort of credit among mankind; as there cannot exist a more impotent creature than a knave convict. To expose, therefore, the false pretensions of counterfeit virtue, is to

disarm it at once of all power of mischief, and to perform a public service of the most advantageous kind in which any man can employ his time and his talents. The voice, indeed, of an honest satirist, is not only beneficial to the world, as giving alarm against the designs of an enemy so dangerous to all social intercourse, but as proving likewise the most efficacious preventative to others, of assuming the same character of distinguished infamy. Few are so totally vitiated, as to have abandoned all sentiments of shame; and when every other principle of integrity is surrendered, we generally find the conflict is still maintained in this last post of retreating virtue. In this view, therefore, it should seem, the function of a satirist may be justified, notwithstanding it should be true, (what an excellent moralist has asserted) that his chastisements rather exasperate than reclaim those on whom they fall. Perhaps no human penalties are of any moral advantage to the criminal himself; and the principal benefit that seems to be derived from civil punishments of any kind, is their restraining influence upon the conduct of others.

It is not every arm, however, that is qualified to manage this formidable blow. The arrows of satire, when they are not pointed by virtue as well as wit, recoil back upon the hand that directs them, and wound none but him from whom they proceed. Accordingly, Horace rests the whole success of writings of this sort upon the poet's being *integer ipse*, free himself from those immoral stains which he points out in others. There cannot, indeed, be a more odious, nor at the same time a more

contemptible character, than that of a vicious satirist :

Quis cœlum terris non misceat et mare cœlo,
Si fur displiceat Verri, homicida Miloni?—*Juv.*

The most favourable light in which a censor of this species could possibly be viewed, would be that of a public executioner, who inflicts the punishment on others, which he has already merited himself. But the truth of it is, he is not qualified even for so wretched an office ; and there is nothing to be dreaded from a satirist of known dishonesty, but his applause. Adieu.

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Melmoth, William, 1710-1799

Letters on several subjects

Bd.: 1

London (1820)

Epist. 278 m-1/2

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